Sight& Sound

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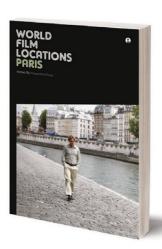
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WORLD FILM LOCATIONS EXPLORING THE CITY ONSCREEN

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PARIS

EDITED BY MARCELLINE BLOCK



World Film Locations: Paris presents reviews of 46 film scenes in their encounters with the imagined Paris that has for centuries haunted the collective unconscious. Along with revisiting iconic tourist sites/attractions such as the Eiffel Tower and the Moulin Rouge, spectators discover lesser known, yet intriguing quartiers usually tucked away from the tourists' gaze. This volume examines how the City of Light is reinvented through each film director's lens. Striking screengrabs illustrate the importance of location, while contemporary photographs coincide with cinematic narratives set in this magnificent city. The reader of this volume of World Film Locations will delight in recognizing, again and again, not only the familiar and unfamiliar aspects of Paris, but in being reassured that it is and will always be there.

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– David Sterritt (Author of *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible*)



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EDITED BY GABRIEL SOLOMONS

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World Film Locations: Los Angeles is an engaging and highly visual city-wide tour of both well known and slightly lesser known films shot on location in one of the birthplaces of cinema and the 'screen spectacle'. Brief but concise reviews of 46 carefully chosen scenes from such varied films as Chinatown, Falling Down, The Player and Killer of Sheep – alongside a selection of short essays – explore how motion pictures have shaped the role of Los Angeles in our collective consciousness, as well as how these cinematic moments reveal aspects of the life and culture of a city that are often hidden from view. Illustrated throughout with dynamic screen captures, stills of filming locations as they appear now and city maps that include location information, World Film Locations: Los Angeles is an idispensable guide for film lovers and travellers fascinated by 'The City of Angels'.

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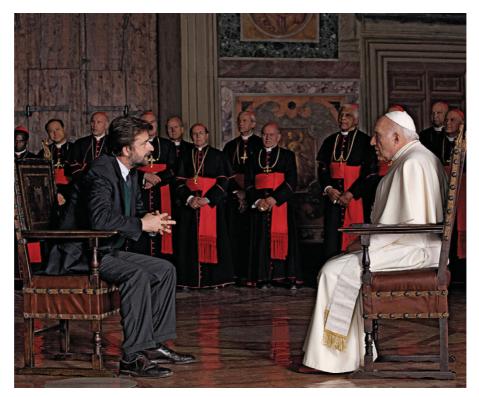
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Welcome. Our Top Ten films of 2011 poll might be the headline-grabber this month, but there are other themes that might equally well have led. First, a chain of festive gaiety ties our coverage of the terrific silent-movie satire *The Artist* (see p.30) to Martin Scorsese's 3D film for children Hugo (p.36) – which concerns cinema pioneer Georges Méliès – and to two landmark musicals, *Meet Me* in St. Louis and The Boy Friend (p.40). Second, there's an emphasis on Britain and reality in items dedicated to the controversial drama-doc maven Peter Kosminsky (p.52), that intimate chronicler of British peculiarity Molly Dineen (left, and p.46), and Carol Morley's extraordinary investigation of a forgotten woman in *Dreams of a Life* (p.44). And there's still room for a quiet success, Las acacias (p.56), and a chance to talk to Nanni Moretti about a reluctant Pope (far left, and p.50). We may not be infallible, but we know our bull. •• Nick James

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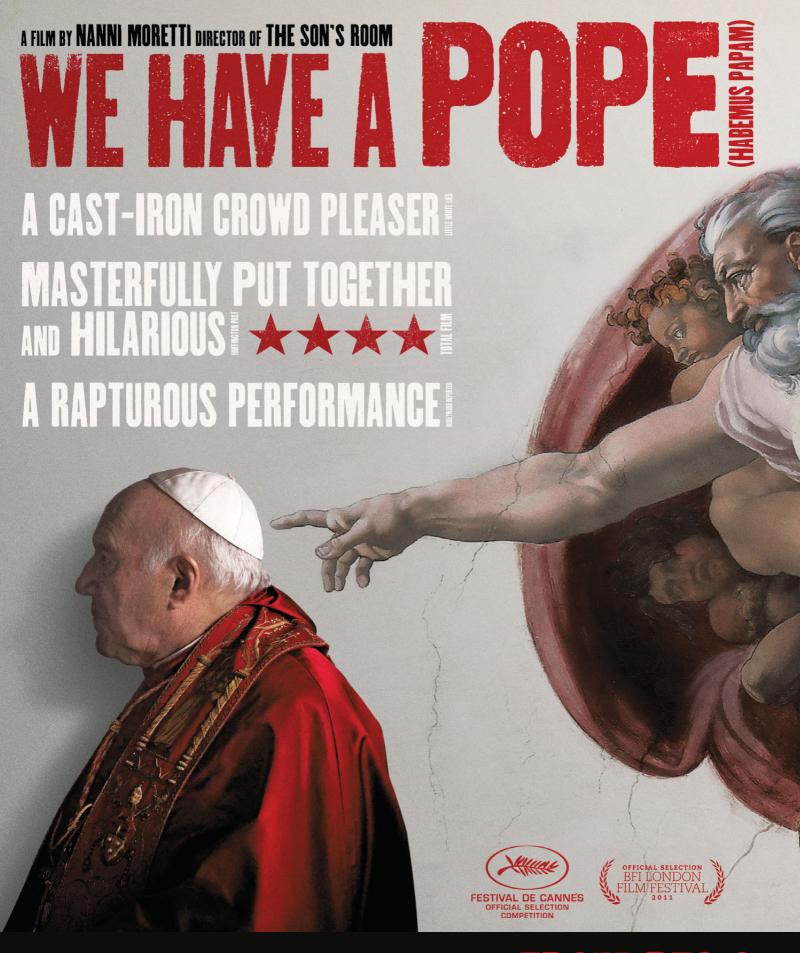


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AND ONLINE THIS MONTH The complete Films of 2011 poll, plus the best DVDs and online video of the year | Carol Morley on video | New James Benning works | www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound



BE DIVINELY ENTERTAINED FROM DEG 2





NICK JAMES

RESISTING IRRESISTIBLE





Titanic and Avatar director James Cameron has already been "king of the world", but he can now also claim to have changed history too. According to a press release from IHS Screen Digest, the 35mm projection print has now truly had its day

and *Avatar* was the trigger that propelled the film industry to switch to digital projection "at a stunning velocity". January 2012 will apparently mark the point at which there will be more digital screens in the world industry than analogue, and by the end of 2012 it is estimated that 35mm projection's share of the global market will decline to 37 per cent. It will further fall to 17 per cent by the end of 2015. What's more, mainstream usage of 35mm will have vanished from the USA by the end of 2013, with Western Europe set to be all-digital in the mainstream one year later.

Other than the speed at which this changeover has been accomplished, there's nothing very surprising about it. The industry has moved to the digital-projection platform with a similar alacrity to that which fired the switch to synchronised sound at the end of the 1920s - the kind of goldrush, don't-miss-the-boat mentality that 3D has clearly not yet inspired. And while this may be a moment to reflect on what has been, it is not one in which to fight rearguard actions against the inevitable. This column has waxed nostalgic about frame flicker and the swirl of grain often enough in the past not to revisit such aesthetic niceties. Practical experience of the decline of projectionist skills and the increasing reliability of DCPs (Digital Cinema Packages - the projection-ready, compressed and encrypted digital form of the film made for distribution from the master files) has taught me that the latter is now the pragmatic preference for newly distributed films, most of the time.

But that's not to say that there isn't something important to protect here, and that something is our screen heritage - how we preserve films for the future. For the time being, the model of production that remains best practice in Hollywood is this: you can choose to shoot on 35mm film or go for digital-capture options (such as the Red camera or the newer Alexa - a "game changer" according to cinematographer Roger Deakins); then you scan the results on to a digital platform for the edit and the grading. The finished version is – for the time being – still usually made into a film print. But this last part of the process is now under similar pressure to that being exerted on the screening print. For what is the point of producing a 35mm print at all if it's never going to be projected that way?

Hollywood's Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences answered that question in their November 2007 report 'The Digital Dilemma'. It concluded that all digital forms of storage and preservation were too unreliable, and that the most reliable (and cheapest) way to preserve a film for posterity was to separate the digital colour channels and preserve the 'film' in three film negatives, one red, one green and one blue.

But with the rapid switch to digital projection, archival experts are now having second thoughts. Recently the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers agreed an international standard for digital. The digital format in which 'films' may be preserved in future is called a

The projection print has had its day - and 'Avatar' was the trigger that propelled the film industry to switch to digital projection at a stunning velocity

DCDM (Digital Cinema Distribution Master). The DCDM is made up of around 2 terabytes' worth of uncompressed data (for a 2K movie) or 8 terabytes (for 4K), and amounts (loosely speaking) to a TIFF file for every frame of the film, plus a 48kHz BWAV audio file and the technical recipe. It can be stored in many different ways.

Either solution poses problems. If archives were to switch from film to DCDM storage (and there is greater faith now in technology that regularly checks, repairs and replicates digital data in storage), they might find studios and film producers reluctant to let them have the DCDM because of anxieties about piracy. Certainly the compressed and encrypted DCPs are unacceptable to archives (compression reduces the quality and makes them more vulnerable to loss, while encryption risks them being unreadable). But the three-film-neg storage option may equally become a difficult expense for independent producers working to tight budgets. Whatever happens, the very activity of projecting real film is bound to become more expensive – and the pleasure of watching it an increasingly rarefied event.

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There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archive, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

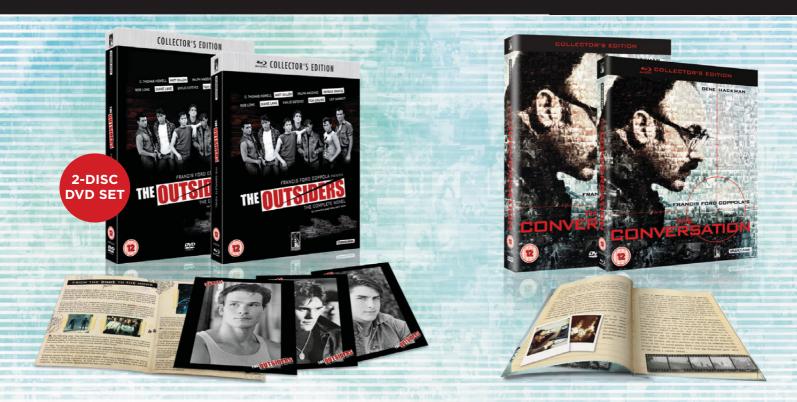




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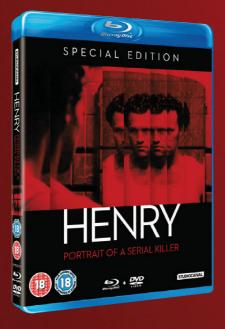
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THE BIGGER PICTURE



Poster master

The output of Saul Bass (above) was so prolific, original and consistenly excellent in so many fields of graphic design – from film posters to corporate identities, from movie title sequences to beer advertisements – that the sheer scale of his achievements must be daunting to any fledgling designer today, even if the example he set is inescapable.

Even among the general public, Bass's name is almost as well recognised as his work. His posters for films such as 'Vertigo', 'Anatomy of a Murder', 'Bonjour Tristesse' and 'The Man with the Golden Arm' are among the most iconic and influential in cinema history, their visual impact undimmed by their ubiquity. The startling credits sequences Bass conceived and

shot for directors from
Hitchcock to Scorsese also
remain endlessly imitated
today. The full range of Bass's
work is presented in 'Saul Bass:
A Life in Film & Design', a lavish
and appropriately beautifully
designed new book put together
by his daughter Jennifer Bass
and design historian Pat
Kirkham, recently published
by Laurence King.

FESTIVAL

Moments of recognition

Kieron Corless applauds this year's Viennale, a festival with vision and focus

If you could buy a silly T-shirt with the slogan 'I love the Viennale' emblazoned on it, I might - just might – be tempted. There's no real mystery as to why the Viennale is such a great film festival, and right now easily my favourite. It's not big and impersonal; rather, warm and approachable and friendly. The programme feels entirely coherent, effectively assembled by just one person, longstanding artistic director Hans Hurch. Special programmes and director focuses are handled by guest curators. (For more, see my online interview with Hurch explaining the principles underlying his selections.)

But there are more tangible reasons for the Viennale's appeal. Unlike many festivals, it doesn't screen in a multiplex. It uses five distinctive cinemas within walking distance of each other. Sound and projection quality are a priority; each year the festival flies in a hand-picked team of specialists to oversee the technical side, which is always top-notch.

The Viennale has also developed a simple, striking and instantly recognisable design aesthetic (and does the best festival bags on the circuit). There's no red carpet, yet the big names still come; this year David Cronenberg and Harry Belafonte, among numerous others. And the festival enjoys close ties with Alexander Horwath's Vienna film museum, which programmes a major season of films to coincide with the Viennale (this year a Chantal Akerman retrospective). The Viennale's catalogue should also be mentioned, for its rigorous, stimulating essays that provide an intellectual context for the programme. Then there are its celebrated trailers. Last year's was by Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul; this year's, by David Lynch, was a lightning strike of surreal wit (watch it on YouTube).

I could go on. Suffice to say, this is a festival with character. I always head there just as the London Film Festival is about to end. As they're very different festivals, not least in scale, this provides an interesting dialectical montage – sometimes a smooth dissolve, other times more of a jump cut – that prompts all manner of reflections. This year I found myself dwelling on a curious phenomenon I've been conscious of for some time now, particularly around Cannes: the occasional



This year David Lynch's Viennale trailer was a lightning strike of surreal wit

but pronounced discrepancy in tastes between UK film critics and their counterparts in Europe and elsewhere.

Two moments threw this into sharp relief. The first was when We Need to Talk About Kevin took the best film prize at London, occasioning much disbelief in Vienna. I've yet to meet a non-UK critic who likes the film, in more or less a complete reverse of opinion in the UK (needless to say, it didn't screen at the Viennale). The second was the Viennale reception of Bertrand Bonello's L'Apollonide (to be released in the UK in January as House of Tolerance). The film is set in a highsociety Parisian brothel at the end of the 19th century, viewed through the experiences of the women who live and work there. It's a risky undertaking, not least in its depiction of female camaraderie and suffering through an aesthetic and nostalgic prism, but I didn't find it exploitative. In fact I liked it a lot, as did every other person I spoke to in Vienna. This surprised me, in light of its derisive-verging-on-hostile reception by UK critics at Cannes (it was rejected by the LFF too).

Taste is, of course, a slippery concept. But it's interesting how often at festivals abroad I hear the phrase 'Anglo-Saxon' directed pejoratively against UK critics in particular, and UK cinema in general.

Which brings me nicely to French director Philippe Grandrieux, who is definitely not to everyone's taste; last time he was in the UK I witnessed an audience member upbraid him furiously for a full ten minutes. His latest is a documentary on veteran

Japanese director Adachi Masao. Its opening is electrifying: Adachi's whispered reflections, his child on a swing, a piece of minimalist mood music. Later, Adachi muses on cinema's capacity to return ideas to the world of sensations.

Grandrieux at his best can do precisely this, as did the centrepiece of the Viennale tribute to recently deceased British documentary maker Richard Leacock: *Petey and Johnny* (1961), an up-close portrait of Harlem gangs. This is a masterpiece of direct cinema, preternaturally alive and raw and immediate. How did Leacock and others make it seem so effortless?

Another great thing about Vienna is that you can always bank on seeing some Jean-Marie Straub (four films this year, three of them from 2011). Straub is a talismanic figure for Hurch, who reckons he's on a par with Schoenberg. On this year's evidence Straub's genius shows no signs of abating; each film was a small miracle, rigorously honed to a point of utmost lucidity.

Straub's guiding spirit appears to infuse the Viennale. How about this from Hurch's catalogue intro: "It is a film festival's job to create moments of recognition, of enjoyment, of shock, of learning. Not of consumerism. Not of implementing cultural policy. But moments without pretence, unclouded by vested interests, by intervention, by cynicism, by everyday business. Committed to nothing but itself. Under obligation to nothing, to no one, not even the filmmakers themselves."

I don't care if it's consumerist – I'm off to buy the T-shirt.

IN PRODUCTION

- Terrence Malick, after decades of working at slower than a snail's pace, is proving difficult to keep up with following the release of 'The Tree of Life'. In addition to the already-shot 'The Burial', with Ben Affleck and Rachel McAdams, and the documentary 'Voyage of Time', he is readying two films for 2012, both starring Christian Bale and Cate Blanchett. The first. 'Lawless', also stars Ryan Gosling and Rooney Mara; Malick was seen shooting scenes at the **Austin City Limits music festival** in the summer. The second film is titled 'Knight of Cups', though few details are known about the project so far. Malick will continue to shoot both projects back to back in 2012.
- Tim Roth has returned to Britain to star in two films back to back after several years working in the US. 'Broken', directed by Rufus Norris, is the story of a child's exposure to violence in contemporary London. He follows it with 'The Liability', directed by Craig Viveiros, a hitman tale co-starring Peter Mullan and Kierston Wareing.
- Jane Campion has lined up 'Mad Men' star Elisabeth Moss for her new TV drama serial 'Top of the Lake', about a detective investigating the disappearance of a drug kingpin's pregnant 12-year-old daughter. The film reunites Campion with the writer of her 1989 film 'Sweetie', Gerard Lee. Holly Hunter, Peter Mullan and David Wenham have signed up to co-star.
- Joshua Marston, who broke through back in 2004 with his drug-mule drama 'Maria Full of Grace' but only released his follow-up 'The Forgiveness of Blood' this year, is to remake the 2009 Italian film 'The Double Hour'. The film follows the romance between a chambermaid and an ex-cop who meet at a speed-dating event.
- Paul Schrader (below) is the slightly unlikely screenwriter of 'Recall', an action film starring Clive Owen, to be directed by Harold Becker of 'Sea of Love'

a National
Security Agency
agent who's
trying to piece
together
the events
of a
botched
hostage-

rescue

mission.

fame. It concerns

Collision course

Vadim Rizov on the strange case of Kenneth Lonergan's long-gestating 'Margaret'

On 30 September, six years after shooting started, Kenneth Lonergan's Margaret opened in 12 US cities. It played for all of five weeks, and grossed \$46,495 in return for its \$12.4 million budget. The story of Lisa Cohen (Anna Paquin), a privileged Manhattan teen who causes a deadly bus accident and can't wrap her head around the subsequent ethical implications, Margaret is 149 minutes of remarkable storytelling in which every character has equally compelling and (in)defensible reasons for their actions.

Unfortunately the lawsuits arising out of the making of *Margaret* – arguably as complicated as those depicted on screen – dominated the critical reception of Lonergan's film.

Born in New York in 1962, Lonergan wrote a science-fiction novel when he was 11, staged his first play in 1982, and in 1991 sold his script for mafia comedy *Analyze This* to Hollywood. (It was subsequently rewritten beyond recognition; he refused to see the 1999 film). In 1996 his breakthrough play *This Is Our Youth* raised his profile further. After he wrote and directed *You Can Count On Me* in 2000, making a star of Mark



All cut up: Matt Damon and Anna Paquin in Kenneth Lonergan's 'Margaret'

Ruffalo and gaining himself an Oscar nomination, Lonergan suddenly found he didn't have to take hacky screenwriting jobs – such as the feature-length *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* – any more.

For Margaret Lonergan secured editorial carte blanche from cofinanciers Gary Gilbert's Camelot Pictures and Fox Searchlight. With one caveat: the final cut couldn't exceed two hours. As a rule of thumb, one page of script equates to one minute of screen time; Ruffalo claims the original script was 186 pages, while actress Olivia Thirlby says

300 pages were filmed during a three-month shoot that started in September 2005.

September 2005.
Whatever the length of the script, even when Lonergan's contract was renegotiated to allow for a 150-minute final cut, he wouldn't countenance anything under three hours. Gilbert claimed he gave Lonergan approximately 16 post-production extensions, a claim denied by the director's lawyer.

By summer 2007 the money had run out and *Margaret* was still incomplete. Lonergan kept cutting, taking a loan from an old friend, actor Matthew Broderick, to keep working. After Gilbert had the original editors Anne McCabe and Michael Fay put together a two-hour cut while Lonergan was on vacation, the director banned them from working on the film. Fox Searchlight then sued Gilbert for failing to pay his half of the budget; he counter-sued, and the parties settled out of court. Gilbert's lawsuit against Lonergan for breach of contract goes to trial next year.

By the time Margaret was eventually released, at least six editors (including Brokeback Mountain cutter Dylan Tichenor) had taken a whack at it. The final Lonergan-approved cut – by Martin Scorsese and his editor Thelma Schoonmaker – clocks in at 149 minutes and 40 seconds, just fulfilling the terms of his contract.

Fox Searchlight gave the film almost no publicity on its US release in October: despite releasing it in Chicago, they didn't even send *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Roger Ebert an invitation to the one and only press screening. *Margaret* is out in the UK in December, but at the time of writing there have been no advance press screenings.

No one will comment, but it all looks very much like a studio burying a film to punish its maker for hubris. Margaret deserves better.

■ 'Margaret' is released on 2 December

THE NUMBERS

Not just a bit of fluff

Charles Gant on how British gay drama 'Weekend' found its way to a larger audience

As Peccadillo Pictures readied itself for the release of Andrew Haigh's British gay drama Weekend, the niche distributor had reason to be optimistic: the film had won acclaim at festivals and rave reviews on its US release, and UK critics were already responding with enthusiasm. But the track record for British gay stories at UK cinemas provided much less cheer. In fact, for positive precedents you'd probably have to go back to 1996 and Beautiful Thing, which had the benefit of being based on a hit stage play, or the semi-gay Lawless Heart in 2002.

With a 4 November release date chosen to capitalise on buzz provided by its berth at the London Film Festival, where lead actors Tom Cullen and Chris New were both nominated for Best British Newcomer, the film initially struggled to land bookings. Arthouse chains Curzon and Picturehouse were heavily committed to rival films, notably Picturehouse's own Miranda July feature *The Future*. But Peccadillo achieved a breakthrough when it landed Apollo Regent Street and then Odeon Covent Garden.

Weekend opened in the UK with £33,000 from II cinemas, particularly impressive when you consider that gay-friendly neighbourhoods including Brighton and Dalston were omitted, and many of its sites offered only patchy time slots. Expanding for its second weekend to 18 venues including Brighton and Edinburgh, takings increased to £35,000, delivering a ten-day total of £92,000.

"I think the success of Weekend is

what is known in the industry as a lightning strike," says Curzon's director of programming Jason Wood, who downplays the role of critics in the film's success, pointing instead to Peccadillo's "intelligent marketing" and "a beautiful poster image".

For Peccadillo boss Tom Abell, the problem has been "a glut of fluffy gay movies, mainly American, that are really straight-to-DVD titles. Leaving aside prestige productions such as *Brokeback Mountain, Milk, Howl* and *A Single Man*, set a few decades ago, the dumbing down of contemporary material for the gay niche has led to it becoming more ghettoised, with exhibitors booking even the strongest titles way off release date or scheduling at off-peak times."

Peccadillo's own research suggests that *Weekend* has played mostly to gay men and straight women, with a very heavy London skew (74 per cent

Contemporary gay male dramas at the UK box office

	Film	Year	Gross
	Mysterious Skin	2005	£1,074,760
	Priest	1995	£1,047,332
	My Own Private Idaho	1992	£997,000
	Beautiful Thing	1996	£479,798
	Lawless Heart	2002	£321,262
	Shortbus	2006	£203,964
	Get Real	1999	£151,411
	Bedrooms & Hallways	1999	£117,029
	Weekend	2011	£92,305*
	*gross after 10 days		

of takings at press time). Gay audiences evidently had a pent-up desire to see a quality British film that reflected their lives, although Wood sees the sexuality as a bit of a red herring. "I think its success is more to do with the fact that it is such a beautifully written, performed and realised work that deals with honesty and candour with the subject of relationships," he comments.

Artificial Eye

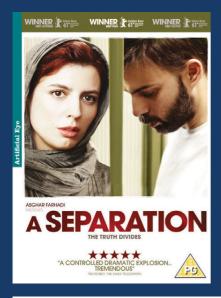
New Releases



Krzysztof Kieślowski The Three Colours Trilogy

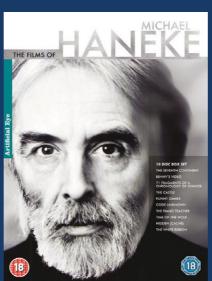
Available for the very first time on Blu-ray, Krzysztof Kieślowski's multi award-winning masterpieces. Three Colours Blue, White and Red, are landmarks of world cinema. Featuring immaculate performances from Juliette Binoche, Irene Jacob and Julie Delphy among others, the trilogy is arguably the foremost achievement by one of the world's greatest directors.

RELEASED ON BLU-RAY 21ST NOVEMBER



Asghar Farhadi A Separation

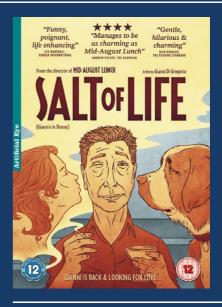
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Michael Haneke The Film of Michael Haneke (10 disc Set)

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RELEASED ON DVD 7TH NOVEMBER



Gianni Di Gregorio Salt of Life

Inspired by his friends sexual escapades, Gianni decides to get a girlfriend and reacquaint himself with some of life's little pleasures. Directed by and starring Gianni Di Gregorio, this is a delightful comedy featuring characters from the indie hit Mid-August Lunch.

RELEASED ON DVD 5TH DECEMBER

RELEASED ON DVD & BLU-RAY 21ST NOVEMBER



LOST & FOUND

Lost in Appalachia

J.L. Anderson's 'Spring Night, Summer Night' is a forgotten classic of 1960s indie neorealism, says **Ross Lipman**

It was Peter Conheim of the Guild Cinema in Albuquerque who alerted me to the existence of a mysterious 1967 film by J.L. Anderson called Spring Night, Summer Night. He had seen it at the 2005 Rural Route festival, a touring programme curated by a former student of Anderson's co-producer Franklin Miller: Mike Schmidt of Kino International. Village Voice described it as "the missing link between Shadows and The Last Picture Show" and it was, Peter said, a film I simply had to see.

I get sent DVDs all the time from colleagues I inherently trust, but I rarely have time to watch them. (I'm not a critic or true historian, and am frankly delighted that there are more gems out there than I can see in my lifetime.) So it was with Spring Night, Summer Night – it languished in a pile with other contenders for two years before I brought it along on vacation back in 2008. I found myself awake one night and popped it into my laptop. After a few minutes it became apparent what Peter had been trying to tell me. This wasn't just a nice, obscure film that would speak to a few cinephiles like ourselves, but a compelling and beautiful drama that held its own with the very best of independent cinema.

What's more, there was suddenly a context for it alongside works such as Charles Burnett's Killer of Sheep (1979), Kent MacKenzie's The Exiles (1961), Barbara Loden's Wanda (1970), Billy Woodberry's Bless Their Little Hearts (1984) and arguably Floyd Mutrux's Dusty and Sweets McGee (1971). I had gradually been realising the existence of an unknown and completely accidental - but surprisingly coherent - body of American neorealism. These works used nonactors playing themselves alongside trained or semi-trained actors, location shooting with existing-light cinematography, and loose-at-best storylines to depict a gritty underbelly of American life unseen on screens on or off Hollywood. And they offered a window into lost chapters of America's cultural history.

Set in rural south-eastern Ohio,
Spring Night, Summer Night tells the
story of a conflicted love affair with a
distinctly hillbilly twist. The doomed
couple may or may not be siblings.
The machinations of small-town
gossip blend with their own soulsearching to create emotional



A whiff of incest: Ted Heim as Carl in 'Spring Night, Summer Night'

fireworks, which wind a discursive narrative through atmospheric dive bars, farms and rolling countryside. The story becomes just one part of a landscape of Americana in which the characters are engulfed by a larger reality from which there might be no escape, even in solitude. They're inseparable from the environment in which they live, yet to escape it is their only hope. The land is as much a character as are the haunted leads, and it's captured in exquisitely lyric cinematography by David Prince, Brian Blauser and Art Stifel.

Anderson (better-known among cineastes today for his collaboration with Donald Richie on the expanded edition of the latter's classic history The Japanese Film: Art and Industry) plucked his talented trio of cinematographers from among his students – having recently been hired to found the film production department at University of Ohio, Athens. He and co-writer, producer and editor Miller originally sought to adapt a 1920s story by Wilbur Daniel Steele set in Appalachia. The rights were unavailable - something Miller now cites as a fortunate break, in that it forced them (and co-writer Doug Rapp) to collectively author a story more suited to the times.

Unlike directors Burnett and Loden, Anderson and Miller weren't

A compelling and beautiful drama that holds its own with the very best of independent cinema from the community they depicted. Yet, like MacKenzie on *The Exiles*, their method was immersive. They spent two years scouting locations in the remote coal-mining hills of Ohio, picking up speech patterns and dialects, and writing the script. For the lead roles of Jessie and Carl they cast Larue Hall and Ted Heim, who had backgrounds in community theatre, and who convey all the tortured hope of youth. Cast and crew volunteered their time against a share of future profits, which unsurprisingly never materialised.

Shooting took place in the summer of 1965, which saw a 17-year locust season they hadn't anticipated. The film's bar scenes were shot in Columbus and filled with locals who had been given five dollars apiece in fake money. With beer going at 25 cents a bottle, in Miller's words, "things got loose pretty quickly". The forest scene near the film's end was filmed in an area so remote that all the heavy 35mm gear had to be handcarried a half-mile to the site. As the scene took three days to shoot, the crew camped out to guard the gear.

The incest theme that drives the film is the one aspect some audience members may find troubling; the potential siblings' haunted love culminates in a scene that fully realises the moral issues at play. The crucial moment has an emotional ambiguity that is both disturbing and affecting, with close-ups of Hall as Jessie expressing alternately horror and love. The cinematography evokes an otherworldly pastoral vision – one that more than compensates for the camera's occasional male gaze and the film's intentionally questionable moral compass.

Spring Night, Summer Night premiered in 1967 at the Pesaro Film Festival. Anderson half-jokingly presented it as part of the "New Appalachian Cinema" – and I believe we're still waiting to see the rest of those films. Filmmaker Willard Van Dyke was an early fan. Despite this reception, however, things soon went downhill. After a year spent seeking distribution, the film was scheduled to screen at the 1968 New York Film Festival, but was bumped at the last minute to make way for John Cassavetes's Faces. Anderson's film was eventually picked up not by the art-cinema scene, but by a New York exploitation distributor named Joseph Brenner. On seeing the success of the explicit Swedish film I Am Curious (Yellow), he decided his new purchase needed to be spiced up, and hired none other than a young Martin Scorsese to make recommendations for a re-edit.

According to legend, Scorsese told him the film was perfect as it was and should remain unchanged. But Brenner ignored him and went back to Anderson requesting that he shoot some gratuitous nude scenes. Brenner's daughter subsequently discovered that the word 'pregnant' had never been used in a film title, and thought it would generate controversy. So the film was released under the awkward name Miss Jessica Is Pregnant. (She was right in a backwards kind of way: they found they couldn't run newspaper ads in the South, where the word 'pregnant' was taboo.)

Needless to say, the re-edit flopped. Though the changes were minimal, much of the magic was lost. The gratuitous nudity in the Jessica version is just that, clouding the interesting moral ambiguity of the original even further. Nonetheless that's how many know the film today: a sexed-up trailer can be seen at www.archive.org/details/ SadsStorefront18, sandwiched between Mme Olga's Massage Parlour and Michelle aka Sexy Gang. Anyone watching this for a thrill will be greatly disappointed, but the trailer does provide glimpses of the original's lyric cinematography.

Both the original negative (recut to the *Miss Jessica* version) and the sole surviving print of the director's cut are now safely housed at the UCLA Film & Television Archive, but as yet we have no funding to restore it. We await the day when funds are secured to allow us to correct the historical record.

Ross Lipman is an independent filmmaker, and film restorationist at the UCLA Film & Television Archive

REVIVAL

In the fields of dreams

The melodramas of director Teuvo Tulio have barely been seen outside Finland until now, but they are a revelation, says **Peter von Bagh**

However good or original it may be, most melodrama – like most comedy – tends to only find an audience close to home. Such was the fate of the films of Teuvo Tulio, the prince of Finnish melodrama. But his work will come as a revelation to non-Finnish viewers. It has a strange beauty that makes the Mexican cabaretera melodramas of the 1950s look like kindergarten stuff. Perhaps more amazing is the fact that it has hardly been seen by anybody outside Finland for over 60 years.

Tulio was born in Latvia in 1912, of Polish-Persian-Turkish-Latvian parentage, and died in Helsinki in 2000. Between 1936 and 1937 he made three films – all now lost. Then in 1938 he made a film that was the blueprint for all his subsequent 12 films. The Song of the Scarlet Flower (Laulu tulipunaisesta kukasta) was based on a Johannes Linnankoski novel that had already been adapted by Helsinki-born director Mauritz Stiller in 1919. It's the tale of a drifter fleeing a sense of his own emptiness, who goes from one girl to the next, full of male bluster and fears, and with a hysterical veneration of the virginal.

The style is sculptural: characters immortalised against clouds, their faces articulate, frequently displaying both desire and rage. The erotic register embraces an entire visual archive of nature and human physiognomy. "None among us are good or bad, we all long for love," says one character in the film.

Tulio's work is all about the basics – eroticism, virginity, liquor, repentance, religion and morality, the bloodstained network of class-based prejudices. His imagery runs wild – clouds, water, roiling rapids, galloping horses.

Tulio broke all the rules. While his friend the director Valentin Vaala (in whose 1920s films the 16-year-old Tulio had portrayed a dashing character that saw him nicknamed the Finnish Valentino) moved over to the 'major' Finnish studio Suomi-Filmi and played the game, Tulio remained true to himself – to the point of absurdity. He held on to his primal artistic strengths as well as his creative madness.

He produced, he wrote, he staged, he edited, and naturally he directed: he did everything and did it in a



Disturbed: Regina Linnanheimo in 'The Cross of Love', above, by Teuvo Tulio, below

way that had a touching 'handmade' charm. Yet just as often he was banal, resulting in a quality of acting and dialogue that could border on the ridiculous.

A typical Tulio plot reverberates with idealisations of European country life. A girl leaves the bucolic bliss of the countryside and is promptly seduced in a city that is a symphony of sin. Several times he borrowed a storyline from Pushkin's short story 'The Postmaster', in which a girl living in sin arranges a fake wedding to appease her father.

But while his plots are more or less standard, Tulio's style is so heightened and emphatic that he could be called the most daring stylist in Finnish cinema. His contrast between light and shade is sharp; recurring images hypnotise even to the point of exhaustion. One peculiar 'prop' of the Finnish cinema, the haystack, became an essential in his films: as a cradle of love, a nest of sin witness In the Fields of Dreams (Unelma karjamajalla, 1940), a deliriously wrought tale of lust, jealousy and alleged infanticide, set in the Finnish countryside and starring the beautiful Sirkka Salonen, Miss Europe of 1938.

His career was short and swift: he made his first feature aged 24 and his last in 1956, when he was 44 (followed only by a uniquely grotesque 1973 afterthought called *Sensuela*). Thus his active period was overwhelmed by the experience of war – always a precarious subject for film, often best tackled by way of melodrama.

Take *The Way You Wanted Me* (Sellaisena kuin sinä minut halusit), completed in 1944 in the final phases

of Finland's war. Opening on a dark night we see a ship, swaggering and intoxicated men, and a cynical prostitute leaning on the ship's rail. Suddenly, to the sound of gentle music, we cut to a meadow in high summer. The same girl, now pure and innocent, waves out to sea, then rushes to her husband: "I have waited for this evening for four long months! All this is true love!"

The girl – like war-torn Finland itself – may be defeated and crushed by life, a shadow of her former self, but she has preserved an ideal image of peace and happiness. The four months she refers to correspond

With every film she went ever deeper into hysteria, panic and madness



to the four years Finnish women waited for the return of their men from the front. The power of Tulio's melodrama springs from such parallels.

In his world, passion is the highest life-giving force, but at the same time it possesses a dark and destructive energy. While his images have a purely sensuous glow that is spellbinding, in masterpieces such as The Cross of Love (Rakkauden risti, 1946) or Restless Blood (Levoton veri, 1946) fresh elements of conflict come to the fore: crime, jealousy, extreme decadence (typical of the post-war period), blindness (a theme also used in melodramas by Frank Borzage, Curtis Bernhardt and Douglas Sirk). Night, dreams and delirium all play their part in a visual landscape of key images and mental visions, where the border between madness and sanity is a line drawn in water.

Tulio's world rests on the use of hypnotic repetition: the same images, sequences and plot outlines are employed in film after film, creating a surrealist *déjà vu* where everything is both old and new simultaneously – where a man is condemned to relive the destiny of his family and his cultural milieu over and over again.

Tulio often used non-professional actors, most probably for financial reasons. But he had one great star who became his companion and ultimately gave up working for any other director: the beautiful blonde Regina Linnanheimo. With every film she made with Tulio, she went ever deeper into hysteria, panic and madness, eventually abandoning all pretence of 'normal' acting and offering herself completely as a battlefield for disturbed states of mind.

Her performances were as one with his dark, menacing cinematographic landscape – a world of shattered ideals and unadulterated erotic fervour. Her acting, all crazed looks and visual overstatement, has an uncompromising impact that can still shock even a hardened viewer.

By the time he was making his last films in the 1950s, Tulio was veering towards irrationality, sealing his incompatibility with 'official' art and the pretentious world of cinema at large. Rather than compromise, the untamed bird of Finnish cinema chose silence and total isolation, only to be idolised in later years by such kindred makers of melodramas as Aki Kaurismäki, Guy Maddin and Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

■ A season of Teuvo Tulio's films plays from 16 to 23 December at the ICA, London



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MR BUSY

A slice of life

This column is dedicated to the idea that, if you want to understand film, you need to engage with the industry that manufactures it. I could have said 'creates it', but creativity is at a low ebb in Hollywood right now. And, even if it weren't, the town would still be built around the idea of an industrial process cranking out entertainment on a regular basis. With the proviso, of course, that 'entertainment' is a much more difficult product to plan, produce and market than, say, macaroni.

So far, so clear. But accepting the idea of an industry doesn't mean accepting all the crap that goes with it. The Hollywood studio system - the great paradigm for all film production - was built around a series of restrictive practices that stifled the creativity of those outside at the same time as it safeguarded the creative freedom of those within. And the independent film business, which has been with us for some 50 years now - since, say, Easy Rider in 1969 has its own bits of overprotected turf which shelter some but disadvantage others. Increasingly, 'others' includes filmmakers. The independent film business, which should help filmmakers see a return on their risk, now seems to be creating a situation where they would probably be better off doing without it.

When I wrote last month about how the business of independent film is being undermined by delivery systems that don't respect national borders - about how the centre no longer seems able to hold - I wasn't sure where all this was going to lead. Ever the optimist, I thought a good shake-up never did anyone any harm and that new opportunities were bound to emerge. Always the cynic, on the other hand, I suspected that the money at stake would make sure that existing business interests would find a way to harness the new system, just as they have done at most (but not all) stages in the history of cinema.

What I wasn't expecting was to hear a passionate case being made for the centre to be abolished altogether. The plea came in the form of an email from a British filmmaker I know whose experience with his directorial debut – after some time as a producer – was that the whole cumbersome process didn't work for a small film without major festival exposure. Or rather, that it worked against the interests of the filmmaker. I'm sure his case is far from unique, so let's take a look at it.

I met the filmmaker – let's call him



The cinema would take 70 per cent.
The distributor will take 50 per cent of what's left. Then comes the sales agent's 20 per cent of the remainder, leaving just 12 per cent – for the producer.

John – at a festival in central Europe where his film, having played at a number of festivals in the United States, was showing in a special sidebar. He asked me to see it. I couldn't, so he sent me a DVD. It turned out to be an unpretentious coming-of-age story with a real emotional clout and a genuinely commercial competence about it. I loved it. So did most of the people I showed it to.

Along the way, John had picked up a sales agent. A distributor finally came on board and the film was released at the end of last year, in the week that snow kept the buses in their garages and forced Britain's railways to cope with the apparently insuperable problem of running trains in the open air. The results were disappointing. But even if they hadn't been, there were so many people skimming money along the way from the box office to John that it probably wouldn't have made much difference.

Here's why. The film, which was ultra-low-budget, cost £160,000. With that little at stake, you'd have thought it ought to have been able to recoup theatrically: after all, just under half the films released in the UK last year, many of them far less commercial than John's, took over £160,000 at the box office. So let's say John's film took £160,000 at the UK box office (it didn't, but bear with me). Of that, the cinema would take 50-70 per cent for a big movie, maybe 35 per cent for a blockbuster, but 70 per cent from John's. That leaves £48,000.

The distributor will take 50 per cent of what's left, leaving £24,000. Then comes the sales agent's 20 per cent of the remainder, leaving £19,200 – just 12 per cent – for the producer. With maths like that, John's film would have had to take over £1.33 million before it came near to covering its production costs. That's more than the UK takings of *A Prophet* – which had great reviews, festival buzz and an intensive advertising campaign.

"I know I sound bitter," says John,
"but I'm amazed my teeny-weeny
film went so far and am chuffed to
bits about the exposure it got. But I'm
flabbergasted by how lots of people
who didn't back it and didn't work on
it in any way have reaped the profits."

'Cut out the middleman' may be one of the clichés of economic success, but the film business has accreted so many layers between the filmmaker and the audience that it hardly makes sense for an independent producer without some powerful organisation – say Channel 4 – behind him to go down the road of a traditional release any more.

What are the alternatives? Well, the music industry, far harder hit by piracy than the film business, swiftly evolved a network of social-media campaigns and live gigs, which may point the way to the future for the independent filmmaker too – especially as the playing field starts to get exponentially bigger.

"In an international, borderless world," says John, "we are more likely to control our intellectual property." •• Nick Roddick

EVENTS

The Future of DVD is a discussion event organised by BFI DVD, which brings together representatives of three of the **UK's leading specialist DVD** labels - BFI, Second Run and Masters of Cinema – to discuss the philosophies underpinning their work, consider what the DVD age has meant for cinema, and what impact digital downloads will have on their industry. The event is chaired by Tim Murray, and will be followed by a screening of **David Bailey's 1966 short** 'GG Passion'. BFI Southbank, London, 15 December. Tickets £5.

● London Short Film Festival once again screens a hand-picked selection of the best new shorts from around the world. The full programme is announced in early December. Various venues, London, 6-15 January. See 2011.shortfilms.org.uk

Gerhard Richter: Panorama, an exhibition that brings together the full extent of the German painter's work, also includes a programme of films that look into the political and social context in which his work was made. Alongside films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Margarethe von Trotta and Alexander Kluge is a screening of the 1966 short 'Volker Bradke', the only film Richter made himself. Tate Modern, London, until 8 January.
 It's Christmas! – and the

nation's cinemas: – and the nation's cinemas aren't playing humbug. Manchester's Cornerhouse screens a selection of festive favourites, including 'The Shop Around the Corner', 'White Christmas', 'Home Alone', 'It's a Wonderful Life' (below) – and the rereleased 'Meet Me in St. Louis', which also screens at BFI Southbank throughout December (see feature p.40).

● The Electric Palace cinema in Harwich, Essex celebrates its centenary on 29 November, with a day of events and talks culminating in a special screening of the latest film by locally based filmmaker Terence Davies, 'The Deep Blue Sea'. See www.electricpalace.com



In a strong year for arthouse cinema, Terrence Malick's 'The Tree of Life' emerged as the clear winner of the S&S poll of international critics' best films of 2011, says Nick James

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

ong before anyone had seen it, the film event of 2011 was preordained to be *The Tree of Life.* Such is the belief in the genius of Terrence Malick that many commentators hyped themselves up to a pitch of tremendous anticipation. It seems they were satisfied by the result – in fact the film's runaway success as our film of the year (it won half as many votes again as the second-placed *A Separation*) suggests that it might even figure in 2012's *S&S* poll of the Best Films of All Time.

Impressed though I was by Malick's overwhelming spectacle, I had some doubts about it as a work of art: about the awe-inspired voiceover, about Sean Penn's nebulous role, about the afterlife scene on the beach and about the dinosaur's moment of compassion. That so many critics this year were prepared to accept these flaws surprised me. It seemed in a lot of reviews of the film as if critical distance vanished and was replaced by a form of fan worship. Whether or not this is a consequence of what we might call the electronic-media age of criticism is unclear, but I am concerned that, in a time when the professional critic is under so much pressure to entertain, so many critics should be so unconcerned with maintaining anything like an objective viewpoint.

The Tree of Life remains a worthy winner nonetheless, and the view of Kent Jones's friend overleaf that it is "something new in cinema" feels apposite. But it also conforms to a pattern that these polls have set for the past few years. One runaway film dominates by a long way, while the rest scramble for places with fewer votes separating them: in 2009 the clear winner was A Prophet, in 2010 The Social Network. These films have all had the advantage of their release following on quickly from their festival success. One of the oddities that makes our annual poll so distinctive is the fact that we base it on whatever films the individual contributor happens to have seen during the year, rather than on UK release dates. This means that a number of titles get spread across two years, cited from festival viewings in the first year and from national releases in the second. It's noticeable, for instance, that two films I selected last year, Mysteries of Lisbon and Le quattro volte, have figured much more heavily this year, the latter happily making it into the top ten. A Prophet featured in the chart for two years running; Poetry, which charted last year, still gathered several votes this year.

This factor does not, however, account entirely for the strange underperformance of other films. Though there are obvious reasons why, say, Aki Kaurismäki's wonderful *Le Havre* hasn't featured strongly – it hasn't yet been released in the UK, and it wasn't in the London Film Festival – it's strange that such a critically well-regarded film as Steve McQueen's *Shame* didn't get near the top ten, even after showing at Venice, Toronto and the LFF, and being press-screened in London. Perhaps it'll do better next year. I would have expected Wim Wenders's *Pina* and Asif Kapadia's *Senna* to have done better, too. (The films that were actually 'bubbling under' the top ten were *Las acacias*, *Attack the Block* and *Kill List*.) On the other hand, after all the opprobrium heaped on Lars von Trier at Cannes, *Melancholia* came in a very respectable fourth.

Much was hoped for British films. The summer festival season drooled over a killer list of We Need to Talk About Kevin, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy, The Deep Blue Sea, Shame and Wuthering Heights. Many of these films have gone down well, especially here in the UK, and Kevin and Tinker Tailor have both charted here. However, they haven't all been so well-received overseas. In a report from the Vienna film festival (see Rushes, p.8), Kieron Corless notes that he can find few supporters of *Kevin* among European critics. There's no question that the UK scene has been particularly healthy in the last couple of years, with the likes of Tyrannosaur, Kill List, Attack the Block, Weekend and Two Years at Sea to add to the list above (and there were even votes for Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2). But it may also be true that our poll favours British films too much.

That said, I am particularly proud of this year's top ten (actually a top 11, owing to a tie for tenth place). In complete disagreement with Geoff Andrew's comments (see p.18), I'd say there are at least six near-flawless films in the 11, though I won't say which they are. What follows over the next several pages is an edited sample of the responses to our poll. We asked an unprecedented 100 contributors to list the five films that most impressed them and said (in contradiction to my above request for more objectivity): "Your reasons can be as subjective as you wish: best, favourite or most important - the criteria are your own." We've only managed to cram a random 60 of the various responses into the magazine itself, while the rest of the contributors (including the editorial team) and their comments can be found online.

■ The complete version of this poll, including many contributors we were unable to list here for reasons of space, will be available online from 6 December at www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound
Separate polls of the best DVDs and best online video clips of 2011 will also be available online later in December and in the New Year, respectively



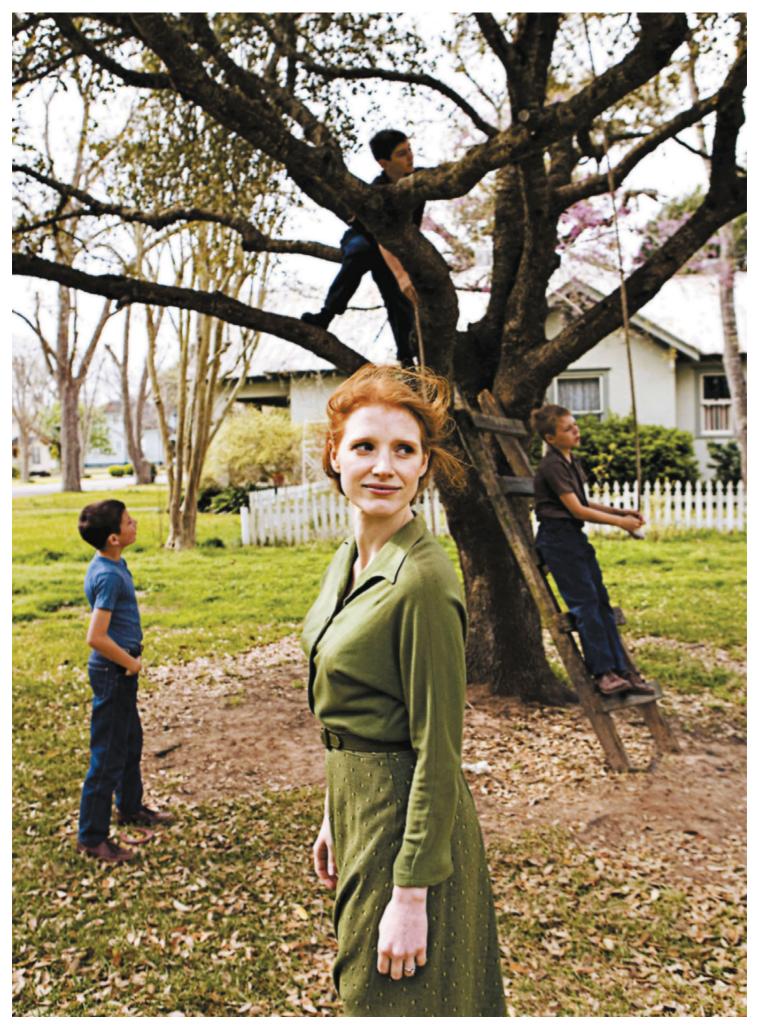
The Top Ten

1 The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick, USA)

2 A Separation (Jodaeiye Nader az Simin) (Asghar Farhadi, Iran)

3 The Kid with a Bike (Le Gamin au vélo) (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne, Belgium/France/Italy)

- Belgium/France/Italy)
 Melancholia (Lars von Trier, Denmark/ Sweden/France/Germany/Italy)
- 5 The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius, France)
- **=6 The Turin Horse (La Torinói ló)**(Béla Tarr, Hungary/Switzerland/Germany/France/USA)
- =6 Once upon a Time in Anatolia (Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da) (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Turkey/ Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 8 We Need to Talk About Kevin (Lynne Ramsay, UK/USA)
- 9 Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino, Italy/Germany/Switzerland)
- =10 This Is Not a Film (In Film Nist) (Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb, Iran)
- =10 Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson, UK/France/Germany)





MELISSA ANDERSON

'The Village Voice', USA

The Arbor (Clio Barnard, UK) A Dangerous Method (David Cronenberg, France/Ireland/UK/Germany/Canada) Jane Eyre (Cary Joji Fukunaga, USA/UK) Mysteries of Lisbon (Mistérios de Lisboa) (Raúl Ruiz, Portugal)

To Die Like a Man (Morrer Como un Homem) (João Pedro Rodrigues,

Portugal/France)

Highlights: Film critics are constantly humbled by how much they haven't seen, even in the oeuvre of a favourite performer. While researching a piece on Catherine Deneuve I watched Ma saison préférée (1993) for the first time. In the third of six films she's made with André Téchiné, Deneuve plays Emilie, a woman growing estranged from her husband and her two lateadolescent children (including real-life daughter Chiara Mastroianni in her screen debut). Emilie's distance is understandable: her mother is growing frailer and she and her younger, erratic brother (Daniel Auteuil) share the guilt of failing to care for her adequately. It's one of Deneuve's best, most undersung performances, a perfect distillation of a woman torn between the desire to relinquish all family obligations and the desperate need to hold her kin close.

GEOFF ANDREW

Head of Film Programme, BFI Southbank, UK

What a strange year! So many fine films and so many of them frustratingly, even fatally flawed. A large number of enormously impressive films this year fell foul of overkill, cliché or some other niggling shortcoming. (I'm thinking of the dinosaur's discovery of mercy in The Tree of Life, for instance, or Michael Fassbender's final, pathetic-fallacy collapse in Shame.) If this makes me sound pernickety, remember that I'm not saying I didn't find much to enjoy and admire in these and other works; merely that 2011, for me, provided fewer fully satisfying films than usual. That said, the following certainly did the trick:

Footnote (Hearat Shulayim) (Ioseph Cedar, Israel)

The Kid with a Bike

(Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)

This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) Panahi invites us into the actual and imaginative realm of his apartment, where he's confined by the sentencing of the Iranian authorities. A man who clearly lives and breathes film, he uses the cameratrained on himself more or less throughout

the movie - as a means of liberation, sending his thoughts, experiences and feelings into the wider world. At once utterly specific in its focus and wholly universal in its relevance, it's perhaps the bravest and most important home movie ever made.

True Grit (Joel & Ethan Coen, USA) Highlights: Best screening: the Sundaymorning Cannes press show of The Artist-

Best scene: the final (Guerín-directed) $shot in {\it Correspondence: Jonas Mekas-JL}$ Guerín: Ozu, Kiarostami and other masters paid subtle, touching tribute.

Best film by a newcomer: Nick
Brandestini's *Darwin* – documentary at its most compassionately, curiously humane.

Best revivals: Truffaut's Silken Skin (1964) and Jacques Deray's La Piscine (1968) - two very different but likewise piercing French studies of desire turned sour, each deserving of far greater renown.

NIGEL ANDREWS

The Financial Times, UK

Melancholia (Lars von Trier)

Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino)

Poetry (Shi)

(Lee Chang-dong, South Korea/France)

13 Assassins (Jûsan-nin no shikaku) (Miike Takashi, Japan/UK)

Rango (Gore Verbinski, USA)

The first four voted themselves in on a first viewing: movies that surprise, disorient, tease, shock, provoke, excite - everything great cinema should do. *Rango* took a second viewing to reveal all its delights: a Hollywood digimation comedy spectacularly fearless in its surrealism, with the year's best voice-acting from Johnny Depp as the titular lizard lost in the far

Highlights: Most memorable happening at a festival: the Lars von Trier rumpus at Cannes, which sorted the censoriously selfrighteous from those who think artists should have the freedom to make fools of themselves, provided they keep making good films. Most memorable cinema visit: seeing Paranormal Activity 3 in an American cinema, with a late-night Saturday audience volubly and near-deafeningly freaked out as the fright moments accumulated.

ROBIN BAKER

Head Curator, BFI National Archive, UK

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzog, Canada/USA/France/UK/Germany)
A Separation (Asghar Farhadi) Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino) Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson)

Weekend (Andrew Haigh, UK) Highlights: The transformation of Méliès's A Trip to the Moon (Le Voyage dans la lune, 1902) through the reintroduction of his hand-painted colours.

After the British successes at Venice and Toronto, remembering that this was a vintage year for TV drama too, with Appropriate Adult (Julian Jarrold), The Promise (Peter Kosminsky) and The Shadow Line (Hugo Blick).

The collective gasp of horror (and delight) from the audience at the premiere of the BFI's restoration of The First Born (1928) as Miles Mander meets his nemesis in the form of a paternoster lift.

Clear proof that the British documentary lives and thrives on the big screen: Senna (Asif Kapadia), Waste Land (Lucy Walker & João Jardim), Project Nim (James Marsh).

Ken Loach's generous decision to donate his papers to the BFI National Archive.

The indefinable brilliance of a widescreen Ann-Margret singing the title and closing tracks in Sony-Columbia's Eastmancolor restoration of Bye Bye Birdie (George Sidney,

Favourite movie scene of the year? A tossup between the dog/truck/Roman centurion shot in Le quattro volte and Charlotte Gainsbourg and Kirsten Dunst facing the apocalypse in a hut of twigs in Melancholia.

PETER BRADSHAW

'The Guardian', UK

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) A glorious film for which I am temporarily suspending my rule never to use the word 'perfect'.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Arrugas (Ignacio Ferreras, Spain) This animation premiered at San Sebastian this year. Based on a graphic novel, it's about a care centre for people with Alzheimer's funny and heartbreaking.

Tinker Tailor Solider Spy (Tomas Alfredson) Dreams of a Life (Carol Morley, UK/Ireland) Chilling, gripping psycho-archaeological documentary about London loneliness: the case of Joyce Vincent, the young woman who lay dead, undiscovered, in her North London flat for three years

NICOLE BRENEZ

Critic, France

Abel Ferrara in Lucca

(Gérard Courant, France/Italy) A modest and faithful record of some moments at the Lucca Film Festival in October 2010, with songs and speeches by Ferrara.

The Autobiography of Nicolae Ceaucescu (Autobiografia lui Nicolae Ceausescu) (Andrei Ujica, Romania)

Far from Afghanistan (John Gianvito, Jon Jost, Minda Martin, Travis Wilkerson, Soon-mi Yoo, Rob Todd, Pacho Velez, USA, in progress) To commemorate the tenth year of the invasion in Afghanistan, a collaborative work analysing the logic and consequences of American imperialism.

Impressions (Jacques Perconte, France) Digital fresco about Normandy landscapes that renews the forms of editing.

Video Letter (Adachi Masao, Japan) Adachi, still a political prisoner in Japan in the sense that he cannot travel abroad, sends a video letter to his audience to explain his ideals.

Highlights: Book: Radical Light: Alternative Film and Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000 (edited by Steve Anker, Kathy Geritz and Steve Seid), a scientifically and visually magnificent survey.

Film/Exhibition: 'Correspondence(s)/ $The \ Completed \ Letters', curated \ by \ Jordi$ Ballo for the CCCB (Barcelona, Spain): five video-letter exchanges between filmmakers from different parts of the world, including José Luis Guerín and Jonas Mekas, Albert Serra and Lisandro Alonso, Isaki Lacuesta and Noami Kawase, Jaime Rosales and Wang Bing, Fernando Eimbeke and So Yong

Retrospective: 'Minding the Gap: The Films of Dick Fontaine', curated by Michael Chaiken at the Anthology Film Archives, New York. A great British stylist and fighter with a knack for working exactly where the wind of history begins to blow.

EDWARD BUSCOMBE

Critic and academic UK

This year I was again on the jury for the Satyajit Ray prize, awarded to the best first feature shown at the London Film Festival. There were 40 films in contention. The standard was high, and we would have been happy to give the award to any of four or five films. Two stood out. One was:

Las acacias

(Pablo Giorgelli, Argentina/Spain) This had a deceptively simple, even banal plot in which a middle-aged and rather grumpy lorry driver is obliged to give a lift to a young woman and her baby. In the course of the long drive, gradually these two people get to know and even like each other. Properly speaking, one should say three people because the baby certainly has a personality of its own. Eventually, after much discussion, the

award went to the other that stood out: Li and the Poet (Andrea Segre, Italy) It's about the relationship between a Chinese immigrant woman and an elderly fisherman, an unlikely story handled with delicacy and aplomb, and set in a wintry Venice, though not in those parts the

tourists normally see. **Archipelago** (Joanna Hogg, UK) That rare thing these days, a British film of restraint and precision, minutely detailing the kind of suppressed hysteria that seems so typical of our upper middle class.

As If I Am Not There (Juanita Wilson, Ireland/Macedonia/Sweden/Germany) I couldn't say I enjoyed this film about the horrors of rape in the Bosnian conflict. It's harrowing and brave, exploring emotions one wishes people didn't have - not all of them belonging to the perpetrators. **True Grit** (Joel & Ethan Coen)

Not the Coens' best but it has a wonderful performance by the sainted Jeff Bridges.

DAVE CALHOUN

Film editor, 'Time Out' London

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)

Pina (Wim Wenders, Germany/France/UK)

We Need to Talk About Kevin

(Lynne Ramsay) **Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy** (Tomas Alfredson) Highlights: Just getting to Fespaco (the biannual festival of African film) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in the same week in February that events took a distinct turn for the worse in Libya – my original flight was via Tripoli – felt like a feat. But 12 days later, seeing the festival's big awardwinners carrying their trophies through a sweaty, packed, post-midnight Ouagadougou airport with everyone clapping, just hours after the closing ceremony in the city's stadium, was a real thrill that made the gap between filmmakers and audiences feel pleasingly

I also bumped into Mark Cousins in Ouagadougou, camera in hand, and he deserves a name-check for his masterly TV series The Story of Film: An Odyssey.

TOM CHARITY

Vancity Theatre program co-ordinator, Canada

Once upon a Time in Anatolia (Nuri Bilge Ceylan)



Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy It took a Swede to break into the British psyche with such mastery. Le Carré's plot is almost anecdotal in this film where atmosphere and subtext grip and fascinate. An inspiring mise en scène and superb performances from Oldman, Hurt and Firth. Agnès Poirier



This Is Not a Film Panahi uses the camera – trained on himself more or less throughout the movie – as a means of liberation. At once utterly specific in its focus and wholly universal in its relevance, it's perhaps the bravest and most important home movie ever made, Geoff Andrew



9 Le quattro volte A year for 'spiritual' films – first and foremost Frammartino's film, where wordlessly the human, animal, vegetable, mineral states of the world are shown as interdependent equals, oddly recalling Jacques Tati's fragile communities threatened by change. Paul Mayersberg

Position Among the Stars (Stand van de Sterren) (Leonard Retel Helmrich, Netherlands)

Drive (Nicolas Winding Refn, USA) This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) Source Code (Duncan Jones, USA/France) Highlights: I often feel out of step with the multiplex audience, but when you're rolling in the aisles with them, as I was watching Bridesmaids, it's a great feeling.

The use of CGI in Take Shelter and Black Swan, as an expression of characters' psychological tumult, seems to me worth infinitely more than the thousand ships and armies of digital cannon-fodder we're supposed to wonder at in Immortals and The Three Musketeers.

The paper lanterns that float off the screen in the love scene in Tangled made a rare instance of 3D beauty. See also the blizzard of cocaine in A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas.

Lowlight: The dismaying disappearance of video (DVD/Blu-ray) rental stores, whether of the independent or mainstream variety. I enjoyed having DVDs on my shelves, and found browsing rental stores a rewarding experience. That era seems to be over, or almost over, and here in Canada the catalogues of Netflix and other online distributors are sadly deficient.

Professor of film history, Birkbeck, Uk

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Deep, rich, deft in its camerawork and editing and sometimes dotty, this was undoubtedly the cinema event of the year, reaching all the way from Cannes into local multiplexes. Part of the joy of Malick's $grandiose\ exploration\ of\ childhood-both$ his hero's and the Earth's – was seeing how it surprised and disconcerted audiences, often the same ones.

Faust (Aleksandr Sokurov, Russia) The conclusion of Sokurov's extended meditation on the private lives of men associated with great evil (Hitler, Lenin and Hirohito) took us back to the roots of o'erweening ambition, with a dense, provocative reading of the Faust legend set in a magically morphed world that's part Enlightenment science and part epic empyrean as imagined by Goethe. Awe-inspiring.

The Kid with a Bike

(Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne)

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson) The Soldier's Courtship

(Robert Paul, 1896, UK) Unbelievably, the very first fiction film ever shot in Britain, long believed lost, has turned up in the Rome Cineteca Nazionale and received its restoration premiere at the Pordenone Giornate del Cinema Muto. The result is unexpectedly well staged and acted, with two dancers from the Alhambra music hall, on whose roof it was shot, throwing themselves into an uninhibited display of affection that certainly beats

Edison's coy Rice-Irwin Kiss of three months

Highlights: A superb French restoration of Méliès's popular A Trip to the Moon (1902), based on a coloured print from Barcelona, kicked off Cannes and showed at other festivals, reminding audiences how impoverished our normal experience of silents has been.

Mark Cousins's wonderfully engaged Story of Film pilgrimage also appeared at various festivals before starting its run

Another highlight was discovering the Chinese independent Xu Tong's cycle of gutsy documentaries about colourful lives lived on the margins of China's tumultuous recent history, when the latest, *Shattered*, showed at the CinDi Festival in Seoul.

MARK COUSINS

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) I was in an edit suite all year but popped out to catch this, the greatest grief movie I have ever seen. It's cut so fast that everything in it (except the prehistoric scenes) is half glimpsed, as if sadness is something you see out of the corner of your eye.

Faust (Aleksandr Sokurov)

I Wish (Kiseki) (Kore-eda Hirokazu, Japan) How does Kore-eda make his films with children so fresh? I Wish, in which kids trek to see bullet trains, was the funniest thing I saw on screen this year.

Bridesmaids (Paul Feig, USA/Japan) I Wish reminded me, strangely, of Bridesmaids, written by and starring Kristen Wiig. I saw it on a ten-hour flight. Few films can be great on those small screens but its vitality and spikiness made it so.

All Watched over by Machines of Loving

Grace (Adam Curtis, UK)

This was so intense that watching it was like going into the den of a lion. Highlights: I started the year in Ouagadougou, where the central square in the city was closed so that filmmakers could hold hands and walk in a vast circle to remember the dead moviemakers of the previous year. So moving, and not something that would happen in the UK!

At the Telluride Film Festival I saw Lynne Ramsay's We Need to Talk About Kevin and Steve McQueen's Shame back to back, and felt like I'd been carpet-bombed by brilliant Brits.

The revelation of the year for me was the Argentinian film Aniceto, by Leonardo Favio, shown in Telluride by legendary Brazilian musician Caetano Veloso. It was like a Rudolph Valentino movie, and as great as Vincente Minnelli's musicals.

But my most memorable moment was in Moscow, in the apartment of Eisenstein's wife Pera Atasheva. He didn't always treat her well, but there's a note from him calling her his "soldadera", the name for the women in the Mexican Revolution who travelled with the men. If his life was a war, she fought beside him. I raise a glass to her.

FERNANDO F. CROCE

This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) A Kafkaesque comedy of anxiety and a tale of empty spaces gradually filled, this microscaled masterpiece spoke most deeply about the relationship between the artist and the camera lens.

The Deep Blue Sea (Terence Davies, UK) "Beware of passion." The moving camera as emotion, music.

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Take Shelter (Jeff Nichols, ÚSA) In a year rich with indelible cinematic nightmares (Kill List, Martha Marcy May Marlene), this haunted me the most.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Highlights: Seeing Certified Copy three more times. Soaking in Kino-Eye goodness at Berkeley's Pacific Film Archives' Dziga Vertov retrospective. Savouring a triple-bill of mammoth masterworks (Aurora, Mysteries of Lisbon, World on a Wire) at the San Francisco Film Festival. Interviewing Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne for their marvellous The Kid with a Bike. Continuing to discover obscure gems (Ford's The Rising of the Moon, Cukor's Girls About Town, La Čava's Private Worlds). Laughing from beginning to end with Horrible Bosses.

MARIA DELGADO

Academic and critic, UK

Las acacias (Pablo Giorgelli) Medianeras (Gustavo Taretto, Araentina/Germany/Spain) A study of Buenos Aires's eclectic

2011 The Year in Review

■ architecture and the isolating effects of life in a frantic metropolis, Taretto's quirky take on the romcom is witty, stylish and deliciously idiosyncratic.

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson) The Skin I Live In (La piel que habito) (Pedro Almodóvar, Spain/USA)

Almodóvar's entertaining, exquisite and audacious fusion of melodrama, noir, horror and sci-fi offers some telling comments on his own filmmaking and on the value of the arts in compromised times.

The Waves (Las Olas)

(Alberto Morais, Spain) This debut feature delivers the best film about the scars of the Spanish Civil War since Loach's Land and Freedom.

Highlights: What does it mean to 'write' in moving images to a peer? The filmed letters between six pairs of filmmakers at Barcelona's CCCB (Centre for Contemporary Culture) move between the visual poetry of Víctor Erice and Abbas Kiarostami, the revisiting of past works in the exchanges between Albert Serra and Lisandro Alonso, and the contrast between Jonas Mekas's daily activities and the ghosts encountered by José Luis Guerín in his delicate black-and-white ruminations on film, memory and landscape. Magical.

Watching Javier Rebollo editing his new black comedy El muerto y ser feliz in Madrid. Discussing Cria cuervos with Carlos Saura on a warm Saturday in June and The Skin I

Live In with Almodóvar less than 48 hours later, and mapping with each the landscape of filmmaking in Spain since 1959. The publication of Ventura Pons's

memoirs Els meus (i els altres): a highly personal journey through the city, people and events that have shaped the Catalan filmmaker's artistic vision.

BRYONY DIXON

Curator of silent film, BFI National Archive, UK When I was explaining to a friend that I was choosing my top new silent films for 2011, he laughed and said, "But surely there aren't any!" True, new-ness isn't something you generally associate with silent film, but my five favourites of 2011 all shared something novel or surprising to me.

Oblomok Imperii (Fragments of an Empire) (Fridrikh Ermler, USSR, 1928) Top of my list was this complete revelation, seen in October at the Pordenone silent-film festival. As the lights dimmed, I shifted uncomfortably in my seat wondering why I had never heard of it if it was in a programme called 'The Canon Revisited'. Nor was I the only one transfixed by the ambition of Ermler's filmmaking in his incredibly perceptive account of the returning memory of a shell-shocked soldier lost in time after the trauma of war, and his anguished response to the transformed world he finds himself in. "Where is Petersburg?" he cries, faced with a monumental constructivist pile where his slum tenement once stood.

Highlights: My best silent-movie moment was a spontaneous gasp from the audience in the LFF gala screening of Miles Mander's newly restored The First Born (1928), and my best new silent-film discovery a fragment of the 1902 Coronation Fireworks bursting on to the screen at the Bologna film festival in glorious colour. And this is novel – at Cannes there were two runaway silent successes: Georges Méliès's A Trip to the Moon (Le Voyage dans la lune, 1902), over 100 years old, painstakingly restored with its original jewel-like colours; and, joy of joys, a brand new silent film, of sorts: Michel Hazanavicius's The Artist which, despite its oh-so-clever tricks with the form, says something profound about the art of silent filmmaking. So there's a good model for filmmakers in 2012: go a little bit cleverer and a lot more joyful.

LESLIE FELPERIN

Las acacias (Pablo Giorgelli) Pina (Wim Wenders)

Shame (Steve McQueen, UK)

Twilight Portrait (Portret v Sumerkakh) (Anaelina Nikonova, Russia)

We Need to Talk About Kevin

(Lvnne Ramsav)

I selected my top five by hastily running through the list of films I reviewed this year for Variety, and choosing the ones that most made me stop and think, "Oooh! Yes! That one!" Who knows if they're the best or not, but they're the ones I remember most fondly.

Highlight: Nicolas Winding Refn's Drive, for providing the most memorable viewing experience of the year when I saw it at Cannes. It was near the end of the festival and everyone was exhausted, enervated and overstuffed with heavy, deep movies. Drive was like mainlining pure cinematic crystal meth.

THE FERRONI BRIGADE AKA CHRISTOPH HUBER & OLAF MÖLLER

Critics, Austria, Germany

Glorious and manifold were the splendours we saw all through 2011 and yet it took us little more than a minute to decide on the films we'd feature here. It's not only about the works themselves but also about the way they relate to each other. We begin with an austere, constantly surprising, immensely entertaining essay on language, simultaneous translation, the pitfalls of communication (Die Falten des Königs, Matthias van Baaren); continue with a direct-cinema comedy of errors showing German and Austrian leaders of politics, arts and philosophy trying to talk deep (Führung, René Frölke); peak with a screwball tragedy featuring Charlie Chaplin, Bobby Watson, Louis de Funès, Alec Guinness, Romuald Karmakar and 60 more notables all doing der Führer (Notes on Film 05 Conference, Norbert Pfaffenbichler); relax with this wickedly bizarre meditation on life under Berlusconi and his politics of fun macht frei (Joule 3D, David Zamagni & Nadia Ranocchi); to end with a state funeral of a most particular kind (Zamach, Yael

A Dangerous Method (David Cronenbera) and Alps (Alpis) (Yorgos Lanthimos, Greece) Modernism, its brackets: from the first attempts at healing through talking to a perversion of group therapy; from a way to finally find oneself in a maze in which one can avoid facing one's self forever; from cure to sickness; from a generously enlightening clarity of direction to its eerily glacial other. Target (Mishen)

(Alexander Zeldovich, Russia) Anna Karenina done as a politically übercharged SF allegory about contemporary Russia's oligarch class, its aspirations and pretensions - we might just as well say: the future of Europe. It's aesthetically stunning, intellectually stimulating entertainment in the grand style. Maybe the sole truly perfect piece of cinema (in contrast to filmmaking) 2011 had on offer.

Schakale und Araber (Jean-Marie Straub, Switzerland) & Empusa (Paul Naschy, Spain) AV-arte piss povera: from a Paris livingroom to some anonymous stretch of beach in Spain; from the stranger niches of universe Kafka to the farther shores of planet Naschy; from wide-eyed recitation to its histrionic stepbrother; from rage as a life force to fantasy as a way of bidding life farewell.

Evolution (Megaplex)

(Marco Brambilla, USA)

The Tree of Life in three minutes flat, minus Heidegger. Thinking man's The Clock. Quite possibly also the Faust II Sokurov never saw coming. **Highlights:** The thing that meant most

to the Ferroni Brigade in 2011 was the Viennale's tribute to Soi Cheang – finally someone did it.

LIZZIE FRANCKE

BFI Film Fund, UK

Bridesmaids (Paul Feig) The Kid with a Bike

(Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne) Las acacias (Pablo Gioraelli)

Corpo Celeste

(Alice Rohrwacher, Italy/Switzerland/France) A debut that shows how the coming-of-age drama needs to speak to the age. Here a story of a young Calabrian girl going through the rituals of catechism provides an astute reflection on contemporary Italy from the church to the state.

Jeff. Who Lives at Home

(Jay Duplass, Mark Duplass, USA) The Duplass brothers have made their mark with intimate comedies from the micro budgeted Puffy Chair to the studio-funded Cyrus. This is a joyful play on character and coincidence as it follows a weird and wonderful day in the life of the eponymous Jeff, a thirtysomething homebody with a

desperate desire to bring some meaning to his tracksuit-wearing existence. Ultimately a meaningful and modern take on family, the film's warm humour and note-perfect performances make it a model of economical filmmaking that deserves to have big reach.

Highlight: Meeting the Dardenne brothers at the London Film Festival. In discussion about what they brought to their fictional work from their background as documentarians, they commented that in both mediums they regard themselves as never being in control – what they observe takes over. It might seem an odd commentdirecting would seem to be all about control – but the fact that they let the situations they create take on a dynamism of their own gives their filmmaking so much resonance.

GRAHAM FULLER

Critic, USA

A Dangerous Method (David Cronenberg) Notwithstanding the thrashings Jung doles out to his mistress (and former analysand) Sabina Spielrein, Cronenberg's account of the rift between the psychiatrist and his mentor Sigmund Freud is his most cerebral drama yet. Christopher Hampton's script may be wry - pompous Freud is constantly miffed by Jung's wealth – but the film offers a chilling subtextual analysis of Oedipal anguish.

The Descendants (Alexander Payne, USA) Payne continues his meditation on middleaged male befuddlement with George Clooney excellent as a Hawaiian lawyer negotiating the past infidelity of his comatose wife while learning to forge proper relationships with his daughters and to value his ancestral legacy.

The Kid with a Bike

(Iean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne) Melancholia (Lars von Trier)

No backlash could diminish the power of von Trier's most swooningly beautiful film, which contains trace elements of Caspar David Friedrich, Last Year in Marienbad and Tarkovsky. Psychologically, it all makes sense - you can see exactly what it was like for these sisters to grow up with a rancorous, depressive mother and a fool of a father, and why one, relieved of social burdens, grows serene as the rogue planet approaches.

Tyrannosaur (Paddy Considine, UK) Amid a cluster of challenging British films, Considine's directorial debut struck me as the best because of its unflinching look at how guilt corrodes, how hate can fill the space vacated by love in a marriage and how violent rage seeks victims. Highlights: DVDs: Szindbád, Ken Loach at the BBC.

CHARLES GANT

The Kid with a Bike (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

This is the film that moved me most all year, and uplifted me the most. It could easily be the most commercial and accessible film ever made by the Dardenne brothers, but the challenge for its distributor is to communicate its lifeaffirming nature without spoiling the film's significant moments of jeopardy for the audience.

A Separation (Asqhar Farhadi) The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Senna (Asif Kapadia, USA/UK/France) Highlights: Seeing Charlie Kaufman's lecture/performance/out-of-body experience as part of the annual spotlight on screenwriters presented by BAFTA and the BFI. If there could ever be a Sex Pistols at the 100 Club of filmmaker lectures, this was surely it.



8 We Need to Talk About Kevin Ramsay's film of Lionel Shriver's novel is compelling, provocative, terrifying. The three actors who play Kevin are terrific (suggesting, as they do, that he was born without empathy) and Tilda Swinton exceeds even her own high standards. Amy Raphael



6 Once upon a Time in Anatolia Ceylan is a novelist of images, and this is his deepest, starkest offering yet. Few films so urgently demand the viewer's active involvement right from the start: 'Anatolia' plunges us instantly into murky business in the thick of night. Jonathan Romney

RYAN GILBEY

The New Statesman', Uk

A Separation (Asghar Farhadi) Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino)

Meek's Cutoff (Kelly Reichardt, USA) A fat-free western, dense in mystery and meaning. Bravo for the use of the 4:3 aspect ratio to enclose brutally a yawning landscape (see also Andrea Arnold's Wuthering Heights).

The Portuguese Nun (A religiosa portuguesa) (Eugène Green, Portugal/France) Green's formally radical love story fizzes with playfulness: explaining that her latest film is unconventional, an actress receives the knowing response: "Boring, you mean?" It's driven by its own seductive fairytale rhythm (in common with Julia Leigh's Sleeping Beauty, another picture I admired greatly this year).

Lawrence of Belgravia (Paul Kelly, UK) Unsung pop genius Lawrence (Felt, Denim, Go-Kart Mozart) is the subject of this fond, oddly moving documentary. He's penniless, craves fame, thinks the internet is rubbish and can't spell 'vagina'. The film builds a convincing case for him as one of British pop culture's last uncompromising heroes.

SUZY GILLETT

Head of Projects, London Film School, UK

Hors Satan (Bruno Dumont, France) Dumont aims for transcendental cinema and when he pulls it off, images and their power ricochet around my brain for days, weeks, years. This is Dumont sculpting Nolde landscapes, mainlining pure cinema. Aman (Ali Jaberansari, UK/Iran) A perfect short film, Iranian-style: cool, calm and crafted with a little bite to end. A LFS graduate to track.

Morgen (Marian Crisan, Romania/Hungary) This first feature by a young Romanian director deftly and humorously tackles migration.

The Lord's Ride (La BM du Seigneur)

(Jean-Charles Hue, France) This provocative and playful mix of doc and drama is set amongst Hue's cousins on a French site somewhat like Dale Farm. It takes us into the heart of the caravans. Highlights: Some rediscoveries. Watching The Oak (1992) by Lucian Pintilie, the doyen of Romanian cinema, at the Cluj festival was a transformative experience, and tracking down the rest of his oeuvre a very satisfying expedition. One film that blew me away this year was Qays al-Zubaidi's

experimental Al-Yazerli (1972), screened at Tate Modern in March, which found an echo on the warm winds of the past for ongoing struggles. The box-set of David Perlov's Diary, covering 1973 to 1983, takes you into another way of filming and observing life. What a genius.

CARMEN GRAY

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Shame (Steve McOueen) An aesthetically stunning, original and psychologically astute portrait of addiction and the terror of intimacy.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Michael (Markus Schleinzer, Austria) An expertly controlled and complex study of the banal workings of power. Wuthering Heights (Andrea Arnold, UK) Arnold's startling sensory assault stripped back artifice to recover the book's essence,

denying viewers easy sentiment in place

of deeper emotional response. Highlights: A new Second Run DVD is always a reason to get excited, and this year's release of Hungarian director Zoltán Huszárik's surrealist Szindbád (1971) was a treat of strange, visceral elegance.

Catching Crispin Glover presenting his Big Slide Show at the New Horizons Film Festival in Wroclaw. This included a rare screening of his It Is Fine! Everything Is Fine (2007), a genuinely mind-bending and fantastical yet profoundly humanising challenge to cultural taboo written by and starring cerebral-palsy sufferer Steven C. Stewart, in which he explicitly enacts his sexual fantasies playing a serial killer.

PETER HAMES

Academic and critic, UK

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Reportedly the last film of Béla Tarr, a director whose vision is unlike that of any other contemporary filmmaker. Given that Hungary's new film supremo – Andy Vaina. of Rambo fame – has declared war on 'unwatchable' art movies, it may mark the end of a remarkable tradition.

A Bitter Taste of Freedom (Marina Goldovskaya, Sweden/USA/Russia) Goldovskaya's compelling documentary about the murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was shot direct-cinema style before her death in 2006. Apart from its testament, it also reveals the continuing power of the format and complements earlier works such as Solovki Power (1988,



The Turin Horse That Béla Tarr's universe is singularly bleak - repetitive, futile, seeming to mock the very idea of significance - is no matter. Tarr finds his meaning in the rhythms of the quotidian – in the very need to go on, no matter how pointless it all may seem. Andrew Schenker

the first documentary about the gulags) and The Shattered Mirror (1992).

Twilight Portrait (Angelina Nikonova) Strikingly shot on a minuscule budget using a mainly non-professional cast, this examines the developing relationship between a young woman and the policeman who may have raped her. Echoes of Sergei Loznitsa's My Joy, but the film also draws a compelling portrait of the separate worlds of professional life and a developing underclass.

The Princess of Montpensier

(La Princesse de Montpensier)

(Bertrand Tavernier, France/Germany) Tavernier's adaptation of Madame de Lafayette's novel about 16th-century politics and passion proves that old fashioned storytelling has plenty of potential if, as here, it is employed with thought and precision.

Alois Nebel (Tomás Lunák, Czech Republic/Slovakia/Germany) Based on a cult graphic novel, Lunák's film uses rotoscope to produce stunning black-and-white images. Strongly atmospheric, its tale of a middle-aged railway worker and his memories of the past is also a reflection on the realities of Central European history. **Highlights:** Most interesting restorations: Jerzy Kawalerowicz's Pharaoh (1965), an unusual widescreen epic set in a mythical ancient Egypt that is also a muscular account of political intrigue; and Faithless Marijka (1934), a feature by the leading avant-garde novelist Vladislav Vancura, about life and work in sub-Carpathian Ruthenia between the wars.

Most interesting event: Jan Svankmajer's discussion of his work with a capacity audience during the Barbican's 'Watch Me Move' animation season.

SANDRA HEBRON

Artistic Director, London Film Festival

Two Years at Sea (Ben Rivers, UK) Contemplative, immersive, distinctly authored and sometimes funny - what better combination?

The Descendants (Alexander Payne) Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life (Werner Herzog, USA) Uncomfortable and frequently depressing viewing, and all the better for it.

The Kid with a Bike

(Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne) Equal fifth: We Need to Talk About Kevin (Lynne Ramsay) and **Shame** (Steve McQueen) I find it impossible to split these two; very

different in many ways, but each to be celebrated for originality and singularity of vision. How pleased I am that these two directors are making films and finding audiences.

Highlights: Jonas Mekas's Sleepless Nights Stories in Berlin (and then in London); Christian Marclay's The Clock at London's Southbank Centre in the spring; Terence Davies's return to feature filmmaking; the excited anticipation, already, of David Cronenberg's Cosmopolis; Woody Harrelson's very funny LFF career interview; in fact, on a highly personal note for me, a wealth of warm, generous and hugely talented LFF filmmaker guests, as well as appreciative and engaged audiences, making my last LFF as director a 16-day highlight.

WENDY IDE

The Times,' Uk

A Separation (Asghar Farhadi) Martha Marcy May Marlene

(Sean Durkin, USA)

A confident and clear-eyed debut from Durkin, this was the year's most effective psychological horror film. An arresting performance from Elizabeth Olsen was almost overshadowed by a chilling turn from John Hawkes.

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson) The Yellow Sea (Hwanghae)

(Na Hong-jin, South Korea) As brutal and urgent a slice of mayhem as I have seen all year. Not for anyone who is squeamish about axe-based cranial trauma -no guns here, the killing is at close quarters and the camera gets right in there with the blood and shattered bones. Highlights: A Brighter Summer Day (1991), screening as part of the Edward Yang season at BFI Southbank. This film had eluded me for several years and for various reasons, until it became something of a Holy Grail movie for me. Fortunately, it was worth the wait.

SOPHIE IVAN

Critic, UK

Dreams of a Life (Carol Morley) Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzog)

(Ben Wheatley, UK/Sweden/Australia) Attack the Block (Joe Cornish, France/UK) Wuthering Heights (Andrea Arnold) Highlights: The Birds Eve View Film Festival has long been a highlight of the UK



2011 The Year in Review

festival calendar, but the 2011 edition has proved to be a bittersweet one with recent news that the full festival will not being going ahead in 2012, due to a 90 per cent cut in its public funding following the transferral of funds from the UKFC to the BFI (which currently has no provision for funding a festival of this kind). That the festival exists at all - acting, as it does, as a focal point for discussion of the importance of a balanced and diverse vision behind the films that reach our screens - is reason enough to cheer for it. In all honesty, though, what I'll really miss come next March is a guaranteed week of top-notch cinema programming, events and one-off cross-arts performances, whose outstanding shared attribute is not the gender of those who created them but their quality.

The BFI's restoration of Herbert Ponting's The Great White Silence (1924) was outstanding in every aspect, from Simon Fisher Turner's new score (which features archival recordings including an original sample of the ship's bell and ambient recording taken inside Scott's tent) to Ponting's charming intertitles to the simply breathtaking fact that such an intimate document of this Antarctic expedition exists at all. Watching it feels like stepping into a cinematic time capsule.

KENT JONES

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Words of Mercury (Jerome Hiler, USA) The Kid with the Bike

(Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

Midnight in Paris (Woody Allen, Spain/USA) Woody Allen's movie - his biggest hit ever, it seems – is simplicity itself. Eloquent, moving, hilarious: a tonic experience. The Dardennes' film is one of their very best, and the balance between precision and a documentarian's respect for ongoing life is fairly wondrous. Words of Mercury is a new 25-minute film by the great San Francisco filmmaker Jerry Hiler, shot on reversal stock, developed and projected fresh from the camera at the New York Film Festival's 'Views from the Avant Garde'. It's the most gloriously sustained stretch of colour and motion I've seen since the silent section of Hou Hsiao-Hsien's Three Times

Speaking of Hou, in 1998 I watched Flowers of Shanghai with a friend who turned to me when the lights came up and said: "That's something new in cinema." I felt exactly the same about the Malick, a fearsome and awe-inspiring experience that, unlike past Malick films, is built on memory (in the matter of character). A lot of rhetoric has been tossed around about this movie, some of it ecstatic to the point of delirium, some of it hostile, resentful and, it would seem, embarrassed, All of it seems to have been swallowed up along the way by the film itself and its immense point of view.

Highlights: Film Forum's 'Essential Pre-Code' series was New York's event of the year in revivals. And the loving restoration of Nick Ray's We Can't Go Home Again was another highlight - a living emanation from another universe.

GABE KLINGER

Critic, USA

The Songs (As Canções) (Eduardo Coutinho, Brazil) Memories of a Morning (Recuerdos de

una mañana) (José Luis Guerín, Spain/South Korea)

A Dangerous Method (David Cronenberg) This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) It's the Earth Not the Moon (E na terra **não é na lua**) (Gonçalo Tocha, Portugal) Highlights: I'd add to the above list the entirety of Ken Jacobs's 2011 output, which includes the masterful Seeking the Monkey King and a freshly made film set against the Occupy Wall Street movements.

Best film of 2011 that isn't a film: the second season of the TV programme Louie. Louis C.K., better known internationally as the "everything's amazing and nobody's happy" guy (four million YouTube hits and counting), hit his long-gestating stride with what is perhaps the best and most relevant American televised series since *The Wire*.

Biggest Enemy of the Cinema, 2011: DCP. Nearly all the film festivals I attended this year experienced everything from minor mishaps (where did the subtitles go?) to total meltdowns (the whole computer system just crashed!) related to the Digital Cinema Package file system. The good news is that 116-year-old 35mm film continues to be a durable and relatively problem-free format.

(Real) Biggest Enemy of the Cinema, 2011: the Iranian and Chinese governments. Festivals shut down, films censored and people in the film community incarcerated cast long and dark shadows over the cinematic year.

Worst Film Event, 2011 (or ever): Cannes. At the world premiere of This Is Not a Film, Thierry Frémaux congratulated himself and his organisation for their valiant efforts in bringing to the festival a work made by someone who has been banned from making films in his home country. A few days later, the festival effectively banned another filmmaker

ROBERT KOEHLER

Critic USA

Once upon a Time in Anatolia

(Nuri Bilge Ceylan)
This Is Not a Film

(Iafar Panahi, Moitaba Mirtahmasb) Slow Action (Ben Rivers, UK) The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr)

Bachelor Mountain (Yu Guanqyi, China) To provide a sense of how crucial film festivals are to the current state of cinephilia, I viewed these films at four different festivals on three continents: Ceylan's and Yu's in Vancouver, Panahi/Mirtahmasb's in AFI Los Angeles, Rivers's in Jeoniu and Tarr's in Berlin.

Critic, UK

Cinema continues to be healthy, in my opinion, with more films released than anyone could possibly contrive to see. So you have to make a choice: mainstream, arthouse, documentary, classics, American series, animation - there is so much going

on. My focus, like that of most contributors to this poll, is on arthouse. Should that, or should it not, include wonderfully entertaining movies such as True Grit and The Princess of Montpensier? Anyway, here are my five:

Faust (Aleksandr Sokurov) A Separation (Asghar Farhadi) Elena (Andrei Zvyagintsev, Russia) Zvyagintsev's third feature shows him completely back on form after the mild disappointment of The Banishment. A number of films have come out this year about 'the condition of Russia'. In my opinion this is the best.

Loverboy (Catalin Mitulescu, Romania) The scenarist of last year's If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle proves to be as good a director as he is a writer. Set in the margins of Romanian society, his new film manages to avoid miserabilism at every level. The sun shines while terrible things happen: it is all believable, and heart-breaking.

Le quattro volte

(Michelangelo Frammartino) Highlights: We are all festival-goers, I suppose. Besides the chance such events provide to see a wide cross-section of contemporary film production, their worth seems to me to reside in the way that they bring the filmmaker into the presence of the public, either in the shape of a formal interview or else a spontaneous Q&A session. Among several such encounters this year I recall the pleasure of listening to Bernardo Bertolucci and Aleksandr Sokurov at BFI Southbank, and Andrei Konchalovsky (so eloquent and engaging) at Pushkin House. At the London Film Festival, Frederick Wiseman and Michael Glawogger defended their respective documentaries (Crazv Horse and Whores' Glory) with humour and elegance; while it was more than enlightening to hear the modest yet passionate thoughts of two first-time women directors, Dictynna Hood (Wreckers) and Alice Rohrwacher (Corpo Celeste).

DEREK MALCOLM

'Evening Standard', UK

This year I will have seen over 500 films as a newspaper reviewer, a great many of them so awful that you couldn't possibly recommend anyone to buy tickets. Every week now 10 to 12 films have to be written about somehow. Around 50 of them, often from festivals like Berlin, Cannes and Venice, are worth it. This year many of them have been documentaries, from complete unknowns to virtuosos like Fred Wiseman

and Errol Morris. The fiction has been less impressive. Absolutely no masterpieces, and that includes Terrence Malick's Cannes winner, which seemed to me to be a brilliant little film about family relationships encased in otiose pretension.

The UK did quite as well as any other European nation this year, even though I have more doubts about Tinker Tailor, Shame and Kevin-all good films-than some. What really pleased was the emergence of such tiny-budgeted British films as Sound It Out, about the last vinyl record shop in the Teesside, and Black Pond, in which Chris Langham emerged again after his troubles and was marvellous as the paterfamilias of an eccentric family who bury both their dog and a dinner guest in the garden "out of respect", thereby getting into trouble with the police. This wasn't even accorded a press show, by the way. So my five memorable films are:

A Separation (Asqhar Farhadi) The Deep Blue Sea (Terence Davies) The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) The Kid with a Bike (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

Michael (Markus Schleinzer, Austria)

ADRIAN MARTIN

Co-editor, LOLA (www.lolajournal.com)

Mysteries of Lisbon (Raúl Ruiz) The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Bridesmaids (Paul Feig)

Memories of a Morning (José Luis Guerín) Drive (Nicolas Winding Refn)

Highlights: At certain prearranged times during this year's Rotterdam Film Festival, a large foyer was illuminated by something that started so modestly as to be hardly noticeable: YouTube clips of hands picking out the main riff of Europe's 1980s hit 'The Final Countdown'. But then the thing started to grow, unstoppably, deliriously: multiple screens, multiple versions (from bagpipe to techno), multiple settings (home, school, concert) and the weirdest possible assortment of all-too-real people doing all-too-real things. This was Koen They's stunning collage The Final Countdown and the severe mental pain it administers via thousands of repetitions of a single riff is more than offset by its wit, ingenuity and window-onthe-world testimony

DEMETRIOS MATHEOU

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius, France) No film this year better expressed the pure pleasure in and of cinema. I imagine Hazanavicius's tale of a silent-movie star undone by the transition to sound elicits the same sort of surprise and exhilaration that early cinema itself must have done and in our knowing, multimedia age, that's so refreshing. Romantic, comic, wondrously inventive - who needs Singin' in the Rain? Shame (Steve McQueen)

McQueen's rigorous and riveting second film is much more than an account of a sex addict; it's a shot across the bows for anyone feeling alienated in modern society. If they keep this up, McQueen and Michael Fassbender could become the new Scorsese and De Niro.

The Guard (John Michael McDonagh, Ireland/UK/USA/Germany)
You've gotta laugh, especially when the world is crumbling around you, but I didn't think I could laugh as much as I did in John Michael McDonagh's crime comedy. This is smart, deliciously scripted and constantly surprising, with Brendan Gleeson's bravura performance unhindered by vanity or political correctness – keeping us on our toes every inch of the way.

Coriolanus (Ralph Fiennes, UK) Fiennes's directorial debut is the best



BRIDESMAIDS: "changes the face of women in Hollywood comedy"

Shakespeare adaptation since Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet.* While Fiennes gives the action a viscerally contemporary setting, he and his fellow actors speak the verse like a dream, bringing pathos to one of Shakespeare's toughest and bloodiest plays. **Las acacias** (*Pablo Giorgelli, Argentina/Spain*) It's always nice to see a new wave just keep going and Giorgelli's debut continues the nuanced, undemonstrative but deeply affecting realism that epitomises New Argentine Cinema.

Highlights: I was so impressed by the team behind the Athens Film Festival, not only for keeping the show going through their country's troubles but for top-class programming. I won't forget the Masumura Yazuzo retrospective in a hurry; the very audible response to Blind Beast and Red Angel of a young and gobsmacked Greek audience was priceless.

SOPHIE MAYER

Academic and critic, UK

Wuthering Heights (Andrea Arnold, UK) Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 (David Yates, USA/UK)

For very different reasons, these are my literary adaptations of the year, not least for the use that both make of their locations and for their endorsement of both adolescent desire and gothic imagination. While Arnold's film is more literate, from its cinematic language to its deft and bold approach that returns the wild spirit to a much chocolate-boxed novel, Yates's work on the final four films in the *Potter* franchise has been consistently engaging, making rare satisfying use of CGI to fully imagine a beloved world.

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzog) **Translating Edwin Honig: A Poet's**

Alzheimer's (Alan Berliner, USA)
No film brought the creative spark and urgency of art-making to life as vividly for me as this film, which I saw at the Punto de Vista documentary festival in Pamplona. Berliner condenses in 19 deeply uncomfortable and necessary minutes years and years of interviews with his elderly cousin and mentor, a celebrated American poet, as he forgets Alan's name, his own name, his fame, the meaning of words – but retains a dynamic and ecstatic sense of sound and rhythm that shapes the film. Its sorrow is its beauty, and vice versa.

Back to Stay (Abrir Puertas y Ventanas) (Milagros Mumenthaler, Argentina/ Switzerland)

This did just what its Spanish title promised: opened the doors and windows of my eyes, mind and heart, awakening jaded senses with its depiction of the lassitudes, longueurs and longings of grief. Its tale of three sisters resonates with Chekhov, Lorca and fairytales but is utterly self-possessed, not least in its stunning use of British folk music.

Highlights: Forget Anonymous. The craziest, most revelatory Shakespeare conspiracy theory film of the year was Sven Gade and Heinz Schall's 1921 Hamlet, in an all-toorare screening at the BFI. As Hamlet, born female but raised male to ensure the succession, Asta Nielsen – out-Garbo-ing Garbo – put the antic in Romantic with every precise and balletic gesture of yearning and despair, tom between Horatio and Ophelia more than duty and honour. It's a dazzling argument for the performative power of silent cinema, even treating a play of "words, words, words".

The British women are coming, with major new films storming Cannes, Venice, Toronto and the LFF from Lynne Ramsay (We Need to Talk About Kevin), Andrea Arnold (Wuthering Heights) and Carol Morley (Dreams of a Life), in a year that also saw films by Joanna Hogg, Clio Barnard, Gillian Wearing and Kim Longinotto.

PAUL MAYERSBERG

Critic and screenwriter U

Le quattro volte (Michelangelo Frammartino) A year for 'spiritual' films. First and foremost Frammartino's film, where wordlessly the human, animal, vegetable, mineral states of the world are shown as interdependent equals, oddly recalling Jacques Tati's fragile communities threatened by change. A serene achievement — and an antidote to the overblown confusions of The Tree of Life. Poetry (Lee Chanq-dona)

This Must be the Place (Paolo Sorrentino, Italy/France/Ireland/USA)

The brilliant Sean Penn, as an Alice Cooperlike rock revenant, crosses bright America to redeem his immigrant father's dark past in a white landscape. A strange musical of venues of the heart.

The Portuguese Nun (Eugène Green) A high point of my year was my interview at the ICA with French director Green after a showing of *The Portuguese Nun*. He was as precise and eloquent as his film.

Police, Adjective (Politist, adjectiv)

(Corneliu Porumboiu, Romania)
Porumboiu's unnervingly slow procedural, in which an adjective is a lethal weapon.
Word-play not gun-play, like Ionesco's 1950s dramas.

Highlight: Among the DVD releases was Max Ophuls's *La signora di tutti* (1934), revealing what a revolutionary this seemingly classical director was.

FRANCES MORGAN

Critic LIK

Post Mortem

(Pablo Larraín, Chile/Germany/Mexico)
A bleak, self-assured creation, a counterpart to Tony Manero, starring Alfredo Castro as a mortuary attendant at Salvador Allende's autopsy, Post Mortem lingered in the mind like a pale nightmare.

Lawrence of Belgravia (Paul Kelly)
Phase 7 (Nicholas Goldbárt, Argentina)
You often feel duty-bound to praise
independent, low-budget horror, but
this Argentine post-apocalyptic drama,
screened at Edinburgh, was genuinely
inventive, working with its limitations
to tense, claustrophobic – and often
very funny – effect.

Meek's Cutoff (Kelly Reichardt)
There was a lot of praise for this singular
western – I'd like to mention the sound
design, which conveyed the brooding
emptiness of the landscape and the
awkward, rickety reality of the characters'
attempts to traverse it with great sensitivity,
alongside Jeff Grace and cellist Dave Eggar's
minimal score.

13 Assassins (Miike Takashi)
Although perhaps conservative by Miike's standards, this samurai remake was immensely enjoyable. Stunning to look at, with deep, blue-green tones and majestic settings, it also ended with the best battle scene of the year, presaged by a banner that reads: "TOTAL MASSACRE".

Highights: Ben Rivers's Slow Action at Matt's Gallery, East London, was a quiet highlight for me. This series of 'ethnographic' films documenting four imaginary island utopias made great use of text – with a script by science-fiction author Mark von Schlegell–and sound, with ghostly archival recordings and electronic music, both of which complemented Rivers's haunting 16mm footage perfectly. It was great to interview Rivers shortly afterwards about these meticulously imagined worlds.

Another memorable interviewee was Simon Fisher Turner, whose music for the restored film of Scott's Antarctic expedition, *The Great White Silence* (1924) — which came out on DVD this year — is both highly contemporary and intuitively respectful of its subject matter.



5 The Artist No film this year better expressed the pure pleasure in and of cinema. Hazanavicius's tale of a silent-movie star undone by sound elicits the same sort of surprise and exhilaration that early cinema itself must have done, and in our knowing, multimedia age, that's so refreshing. Demetrios Matheou



4 Melancholia No backlash could diminish the power of von Trier's most beautiful film, which contains trace elements of Friedrich, 'Last Year in Marienbad' and Tarkovsky. Psychologically, it all makes sense – you can see why one sister grows serene as the rogue planet approaches. Graham Fuller



3 The Kid with a Bike This could be the most commercial and accessible film ever made by the Dardenne brothers, but the challenge for its distributor is to communicate its life-affirming nature without spoiling the film's significant moments of jeopardy for the audience. Charles Gant

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NICK PINKERTON

The Future (Miranda July, USA) How Do You Know (James L. Brooks, USA) The Princess of Montpensier

(Bertrand Tavernier)

Take Shelter (Jeff Nichols) The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick)

It's probably gauche of me to put so many US pictures on my list, but I'm from there. Highlights: On DVD, Shout! Factory's release of a box-set of Ernie Kovacs's pioneering television-comedy/video-art seemed to me an event of not much less importance than the excavation of Pompeii.

New York City's Film Forum showed, in close proximity, retrospectives of the film works of Robert Ryan and Bernard Herrmann, which were glimpses of an alternate-universe studio-era Hollywood

devoted to perilous mental states. A visit to Omaha, Nebraska's Film Streams proved that a medium-sized middle-Western city could sustain a nonprofit movie theatre (granted, yes, that said city was home to a disproportionate number of Fortune 500 companies).

Conversation with critic Dave Kehr gave me a sense of optimism about a profession that often seems like a one-way ticket to obsolescence and penury; directors Larry Yust (*Trick Baby, Homebodies*) and Milton Moses Ginsberg (*Coming Apart*) proved gentlemen of erudition who'd passed through an industry that favours dunces; getting to talk on the phone with Linda Manz and transcribe her recipe for clam bread was quite simply a landmark. (I'm sorry, Linda, I tried twice to send you copies of the article and the package was returned. I hope they carry Sight & Sound at the gas station in Little Rock, California!)

AGNES POIRIER

Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy (Tomas Alfredson) It took a Swede to break into the British psyche with such mastery. John Le Carré's plot becomes almost anecdotal in this film where atmosphere and subtext grip and fascinate the audience. An inspiring mise en scène and superb performances from Gary Oldman, John Hurt and Colin Firth.

Habibi (Susan Youssef, Netherlands/Palestine/ LISA/LIAE)

This first feature shown in Venice is currently touring the world's festivals and will hopefully be released widely. Habibi, shot in secrecy in the West Bank and Gaza, is the first Romeo-and-Juliet story which honestly deals with Palestinian infightings and contradictions. Susan Youssef, an American-Lebanese based in Holland, has made a very subtle film on a very

complex topic. **Boxing Gym** (Frederick Wiseman, USA) After La Danse, 81-year-old documentary master Wiseman has made, in many aspects, another dance film, though this time he's dealing with boxing. These boxing fans who train at weekends are half-Gene Kellys, half-James Cagneys. Wiseman has this incredible talent to let daily noises and sounds become a whole life melody.

The Minister (L'Exercice de l'état)

(Pierre Schöller, France) Schöller's third feature is a remarkable study of power and politics in contemporary France. Screened in Cannes the same week as France's presidential hopeful Dominique Strauss-Kahn was arrested in New York, it is part of a recent trend by film directors, alongside Alain Cavalier's Pater and Xavier Durringer's The Conquest, to document political leadership, its limits and failings. **Elena** (*Andrei Zvyagintsev*) **Highlights:** The rerelease of Marcel Carné's

Les Enfants du Paradis (1945), which will be touring the world in 2012, allows a new



LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS: "one of the most mesmerising films in history"

generation of cinephiles to rediscover one of the most mesmerising films in history.

NAMAN RAMACHANDRAN

Melancholia (Lars von Trier) Page Eight (David Hare, UK)

Hare delivers a masterclass in how to make a taut spy thriller without a single shot fired

Delhi Belly (Abhinay Deo, India) With its effing and blinding and in-yourface attitude, writer Akshat Verma's screenplay jolts Bollywood into the 2 1st century.

Hanna (Joe Wright, USA/Germany) Action meets Godard - who'd have thought it possible?

The Women on the 6th Floor (Les Femmes du 6ème étage)

(Philippe Le Guay, France) The most charming upstairs/downstairs comedy in a long time.

Highlight: I interviewed Tamil cinema filmmaker S.P. Muthuraman for my forthcoming book on the industry and was bowled over by his simplicity - this from a veteran of 75 massively successful films, including 25 with India's biggest ever star – Rajinikanth.

AMY RAPHAEL

We Need to Talk About Kevin

(Lvnne Ramsav)

I loved the book and I loved the film of the book; how often can you say that? Lynne Ramsay's interpretation of Lionel Shriver's novel is compelling, provocative, terrifying. The three actors who play Kevin are terrific (suggesting, as they do, that he was born without empathy) and Tilda Swinton exceeds even her own high standards. Best of all, it's a largely British team behind a very American story. **127 Hours** (*Danny Boyle*, *USA/UK/Australia*)

Danny Boyle goes from making a film about a billion people in Mumbai to making a film about one man in a canyon. It's an action movie about a man with his arm trapped by a boulder in the Utah desert. It's both lo-fi and hugely ambitious, with Boyle's relentless energy fizzing on the screen even when James Franco can barely move.

Tyrannosaur (Paddy Considine) Submarine (Richard Ayoade, UK) Just what you might expect from the directorial debut by the brilliant Ayoade: a quirky, whimsical and, thanks to Paddy Considine's turn, slightly bonkers comingof-age story.



2 A Separation Constructed like a Hitchcockian whodunnit, Asghar Farhadi's film is a moral maze, casually revealing the relativity of 'truth' at the same time as it strips away all our comfortable prejudices about Iran in general and sharia law in particular. Nick Roddick

True Grit (Joel Coen, Ethan Coen) Highlights: Bumping over the cobblestones of Rome in Gianni Di Gregorio's 40-year-old Fiat 500 as he showed me the locations for Mid-August Lunch and The Salt of Life, while also building a roll-up.

Looking on as a rather pregnant and imperious Natalie Portman steeled herself to do a lap of Fox's Golden Globes party less than an hour after winning Best Actress for Black Swan.

Being in awe as Aaron Sorkin gave four ludicrously engaging, smart and funny acceptance speeches at the London Critics' Circle film awards for The Social Network.

TONY RAYNS Critic, UK

663114 (Hirabayashi Isamu, Japan) Chultak Dongsi (Stateless Things) (Kim Kyungmook, South Korea) En terrains connus (Familiar Grounds) (Stéphane Lafleur, Canada)

Return to Burma (Midi Z, Taiwan/Burma) Toomelah (Ivan Sen, Australia) A few words of explanation, since these titles won't be familiar to most readers. I chaired the jury at the Pacific Meridian festival in Vladivostok in September and we gave our top prize to Ivan Sen's Toomelah, a wonderful, understated portrait of an eightyear-old Aboriginal boy wavering between delinquency and education. We were conscious that the film had been undervalued in Australia (maybe eclipsed by flashier or more 'mythic' Aboriginal movies) but the prize was more about signalling the film's merits: it deals unmoralistically with moral issues and uses a long-take, observational style to show township life in a way that hasn't been seen on screen before. Midi Z's underground feature Return to Burma has similar qualities: it uses wide-angle compositions to stage scenes from everyday life in the Burmese countryside, obliquely allowing a political dimension to emerge from snatches of dialogue. When mastered, this style of filmmaking has an intensity undreamt-of by Hollywood's goons.

Stéphane Lafleur's tragi-comedy of fate and family relations handles traditional storytelling with wit, economy and flair. Kim Kyungmook's film about two 'stateless' boys whose identities eventually, magically, blur together strikes me as exemplary modernist storytelling. And Hirabayashi's brilliant short 663114 is the most sardonic/ poignant response to March's earthquake/ tsunami/nuclear meltdown by any Japanese artist. Together with archive discoveries like Stephen Roberts's amazing The Story of Temple Drake (1933, based on Faulkner), films like these keep me interested in cinema and alert to its potential.

KONG RITHDEE

The Bangkok Post', Thailand

This Is Not a Film

(Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) Mildred Pierce (Todd Haynes, USA) The image of the possible extremes of human experience.

Nana (Valérie Massadian, France) The mystery of life and childhood as an accessory to Mother Nature.

Policeman (Ha-shoter)

(Nadav Lapid, Israel) Terrorism and anti-terrorism are two devils from the same womb.

Dreileben (Christian Petzold, Dominik Graf & Christoph Hochhäusler, Germany) The quiet exhilaration of genre (and TV)

cinema, times three! Highlights: Three Thai films were picked by Venice, cranking up the hope that, even in the year when Apichatpong Weerasethakul took it easy, Thai cinema still has room for experimentation and

metamorphosis. Kongdej Jaturanrasmee's

P-047 follows Charlie Kaufman's trail down screenwriting's rabbit hole. Rirkrit Tiravanija's Lung Neaw Visits His Neighbours is the first film (not counting his various video works) by this acclaimed visual artist - a neo-Warholian study of time through the life of an ambulatory uncle. The short Passing Through the Night by Wattanapume Laisuwanchai is an experimental student film with a few tricks up its sleeve.

Plus: Eternity, that sweetest and saddest film of the year by Sivaroj Kongsakul, won the Tiger Award at Rotterdam. It's the third consecutive year that a Thai independent film won at the Dutch festival.

VADIM RIZOV Critic, USA

Margaret (Kenneth Lonergan, USA) Quietly released by Fox Searchlight in as few cities as possible after years of postproduction disputes (with litigation still ongoing), Margaret is Kenneth Lonergan's shockingly successful Great Post-9/11 American Film. Buried by a studio seemingly determined to plant Lonergan's head on a stick as a warning to future would-be indulgent artists, this is unlike anything in American film in recent memory. Imagine Pialat's fearless abrasion played out against the epically intimate scope of A ${\it One}$ and a ${\it Two}$ and you'll start to get the idea.

Two Years at Sea (Ben Rivers) Melancholia (Lars von Trier) Contagion (Steven Soderbergh, USA/UAE) The Student (El estudiante) (Santiago Mitre, Argentina)

Highlight: Introducing Vincente Minnelli's A Matter of Time during a full retrospective of the director's work at Brooklyn Academy of Music in October, outgoing BAM film programmer Jake Perlin noted that, in all probability, this would be the last time a Minnelli retrospective was projected in New York City entirely from film prints. The pending digitisation of film history remains seemingly inevitable and all chances to see repertory films projected from celluloid feel increasingly urgent.

TIM ROBEY

'The Daily Telegraph', UK

Weekend (Andrew Haigh, UK) The definition of modest frankness and quietly tapped substance, sneaking past this year's more grandiose British fare to stand out as a tender-to-the-touch marvel. The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) A Separation (Asghar Farhadi)

Bombay Beach (Alma Har'el, USA) Wonderfully singular docu-snapshots of scrabbling, striving lives on the Salton Sea, marking out Alma Har'el as a name to

watch: it's almost recklessly gorgeous. Tuesday, After Christmas (Marti, dupa craciun) (Radu Muntean, Romania) Still no proper UK release for this soberly shattering, superbly acted infidelity study from one of the Romanian New Wave's spikiest talents? For shame, distributors. Highlights: The story of the year was clearly a British auteur charge, with Senna (my no. 6), We Need to Talk About Kevin, Shame, Wuthering Heights, Submarine, The Deep Blue Sea and Tyrannosaur – not to mention such lower-key discoveries as Jeanie Finlay's lovely Teesside record-shop doc Sound It Out and one storming genre success in Ben Wheatley's Kill List - making all kinds of different, variably strong cases for the rude health of our filmmaking. For me, little in any movie could compete with the ten minutes at an LFF lunch when David Cronenberg held forth on the entire oeuvre of Robert Pattinson (including Little Ashes and Remember Me). R.Pattz is being talked up as revelatory in Cronenberg's just-shot adaptation of Cosmopolis, and the director noted with pride how spin-off fan sites from

the Twilight franchise had already taken the book to heart in anticipation. What Don DeLillo makes of his avid new readership,

NICK RODDICK

A Separation (Asghar Farhadi) Constructed like a Hitchcockian whodunnit, Farhadi's film is a moral maze. casually revealing the relativity of 'truth' at the same time as it strips away all our comfortable prejudices about Iran in general and sharia law in particular.

My Joy (Schastye Moye) (Sergei Loznitsa, Ukraine/Germany/Netherlands) It took me a while to catch up with this extraordinary film and I now find it thrusting itself forward as I compile this list. Bleak and utterly compelling, it sucks you into its murderous world every bit as inexorably as a Céline novel.

Sound It Out (Jeanie Finlay, UK) A documentary about the last surviving record shop on Teesside, in which Finlay apparently effortlessly (of course, nothing in filmmaking is effortless) combines cool observation with respect and affection for its oddball characters. I look forward to Finlay's next film.

Stopped on Track (Halt auf freier Strecke) (Andreas Dresen, Germany/France) About the only thing wrong with Andreas Dresen's new film is its clunky English title. Moving but not sentimental, it portrays the impact of a fatal brain tumour on an ordinary bloke from suburban Berlin, perfectly blending Dresen's skill with actors and his documentary training.

Drive (Nicolas Winding Refn) Highlights: One, finally seeing King Hu's Dragon Inn (1967), eloquently introduced by Tony Rayns, impeccably projected in Rotterdam and a wonder to behold. Two. the process of watching Alain Resnais's films back-to-back for an NFT retrospective, discovering his neglected masterpiece Je t'aime, je t'aime (1968) in the process. One of those days for loving one's job.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

The Independent on Sunday, UK

Five films of the year? Not so easy for once, since 2011 brought what I wouldn't hesitate to call an embarrassment of riches, Cannes, for example, had several works by directors who, without breaking their own mould, refined their craft and (a very significant factor this year) powerfully reaffirmed their

humanistic and political commitment: the Dardennes' superb The Kid with a Bike, Kaurismäki's *Le Havre* and (lest it be overlooked) Robert Guédiguian's The Snows of Kilimanjaro

But here are five films that, one way or another, made a difference:

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) Miss Bala (Gerardo Naranjo, Mexico/USA) Once upon a Time in Anatolia (Nuri Bilae Cevlan)

The film that should have won Cannes. More than anyone in film today, Ceylan is a novelist of images, and this is his deepest, starkest offering yet. Few films so urgently demand the viewer's active involvement right from the start: Anatolia plunges us instantly into murky business in the thick of night. The audacity of a crime story that literally keeps you in the dark for a long time before you even know what the crime. Target (Mishen) (Alexander Zeldovich) Satire as delirium, this dystopian future epic took visionary ambition to athletic extremes

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Highlight: seeing British cinema more consistently engaging and confident than it has been in ages: Tinker Tailor, Kevin, The Deep Blue Sea, Shame, Wuthering Heights... But I'll also cheat here and mention three superb, audaciously simple films by young directors, any one of which could have made it on to the above list: Two Years at Sea, Kill List and Weekend.

JONATHAN ROSENBAUM

Critic, USA

Now that I prefer home viewing to shopping malls, I miss a lot of current fare. But here are five special items:

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzoq) Herzog's uncanny self-promotion skills often exceed his filmmaking talent, but this finally broaches a topic that he can't overpower, even when he tries, meanwhile fully justifying the use of 3D.

Disorder (Huang Weikai, China) This 58-minute film is a memorable Guangzhou city symphony culled from street footage by many hands and a major example of recent Chinese independent cinema

Unforgivable (Impardonnables) (André Téchiné France)

Conceivably Téchiné's best film in 15 years, since Les Voleurs, once again about characters irreparably screwed up, all of them loved equally by their attentive



1 The Tree of Life Deep, rich, deft in its camerawork and editing and sometimes dotty, this was the cinema event of the year. Part of the joy of Malick's grandiose exploration of childhood – both his hero's and the Earth's - was seeing how it surprised and disconcerted audiences. lan Christie

director/co-writer; I was especially moved by Adriana Asti's troubled detective.

Mysteries of Lisbon (Raúl Ruiz) The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr)

This doesn't measure up to Tarr's Sátántangó (what does?) but held my gripped attention over three successive viewings while aptly and cogently refusing to explain why. **Highlights:** And here are five overlooked DVD releases, again listed alphabetically: **By the Bluest of Seas** (*Boris Barnet*, 1935). Available with English subtitles from Ruscico.com (even though it has the most intractable and dysfunctional website ever

The Hunter (Rafi Pitts). Released in the UK by Artificial Eye. I still haven't caught up with This Is Not a Film but Pitts's feature is the most interesting new Iranian film I've seen in years.

Lowlands (*Peter Thompson*, 2009). Available with multiple and fascinating extras from Thompson's own website at chicagomediaworks.com.

Promised Lands (Susan Sontag, 1974) Released by Zeitgeist and Kim Stim in the US – Sontag's only documentary and the only one of her films available on DVD. Red Psalm (Miklós Jancsó, 1972). Available from Second Run DVD in the UK.

SUKHDEV SANDHU

This Our Still Life (Andrew Kötting, UK) It's a reinvention of the home movie - ye olde off-piste Albion meets Jonas Mekas. The latest tremulous instalment of Kötting's life-and-death collaboration with his daughter Eden is a beautifully fraught, rapturously melancholic harvesting of one of the most vital bodies of filmwork in Britain.

Le Havre (Aki Kaurismäki, Finland/France/Germany) A truly lovely offering, mellower and more avuncular than much of Kaurismäki's work.

Melancholia (Lars von Trier) Beijing Besieged By Waste (Wang Jiuliang,

This arresting documentary, at once eerie and urgent, explores the mountains of refuse that breakneck urbanism has produced in the Chinese capital. One image of the splayed yet oddly restful corpse of a man who had assembled a tiny shack amidst an enormous wasteland - has haunted me like no other in 2011.

The Forgotten Space (Noël Burch & Allan Sekula, Netherlands/Austria) Itself almost forgotten, bobbing along though the uncertain channels of the global festivalscape, this essay film about contemporary maritime politics is a fascinating drift-work, invaluable for anyone interested in the cinema of globalisation, obscured modernities and the poetics of infrastructure.

Highlights: The Story of Film: An Odyssey. Mark Cousins's thrilling voyage through the history and possible futures of visual culture is a modern-day Ways of Seeing: a poetic, loving, personal, exhilaratingly pedagogic antidote to the parochialism of most film histories.

ANDREW SCHENKER

The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr) Tarr's latest (and allegedly last) film immerses the viewer in its singularly barren, windswept world from the first shot. As the camera tracks through the confined space of a farmhouse from which it rarely departs, the visual textures and expert sound design conjure up an indelible universe. That this universe is singularly bleak - repetitive, futile, seeming to mock the very idea of significance - is no matter. Tarr finds his meaning in the rhythms of the

2011 The Year in Review

quotidian – in the very need to go on, no matter how pointless it all may seem.

This Is Not a Film (Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb) To Die Like a Man (João Pedro Rodrigues) Attenberg (Athina Rachel Tsangari, Greece) Mysteries of Lisbon (Raúl Ruiz)

VIRGINIE SÉLAVY

Essential Killing (Jerzy Skolimowski, Poland/Norway/Ireland/Hungary) This economical story of one man (Vincent Gallo) battling against hostile nature as he attempts to evade his captors is a savage existential tale of human survival with powerful political resonance.

Cold Fish (Tsumetai nettaigyo)

(Sono Sion, Japan) Set in the world of tropical fish retailing,

this spectacularly bloody, surreally beautiful and blackly humorous murder story is a jaw-dropping display of filmic misanthropy.

Midnight Son (Scott Leberecht, USA) A dreamy indie vampire tale about two misfit lovers set in a shadowy, deserted LA. Refreshingly free of horror clichés, it is genuinely creepy, melancholy and moving, conjuring up the sweetness and destructiveness of love.

Take Shelter (Jeff Nichols)

Michael Shannon gives a devastating performance as a Midwestern man who has visions of an impending apocalyptic storm, from which he obsessively tries to protect his family. Nightmarish and ominous, the film hovers between a harrowing, realistic depiction of paranoid schizophrenia and the intimation of an elusive mystery

Red White & Blue (Simon Rumley, UK/USA) Set in Austin, Texas, this is an affecting story of screwed-up love and an intelligent take on serial killers, in which the ties that connect an emotionally reluctant young woman, a former lover and an edgy loner lead to tragic consequences.

Highlights: Béla Tarr's guest curating at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Best of all was Gábor Bódy's American Torso (1975), a playful and poetic meandering through war and revolution, map-making, literature and Hungarian exiles

The Devils (1971) at the East End Film Festival – May 2011. This screening of Ken Russell's newly restored masterpiece of excess – a sulphurous, visionary, carnal portrayal of unbridled desire, repressive religion and power games in 17th-century France – was a very special event, augmented by the presence of the director, who, although frail, had lost none of his sharp wit.

PAUL JULIAN SMITH

Academic, USA

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) The Skin I Live In (Pedro Almodóvar) Because even minor Almodóvar is more complex and contradictory than works by any other auteur.

Miss Bala (Gerardo Naranjo) Bridesmaids (Paul Feig)

Because it changes the face of women in

Hollywood comedy. **Post Mortem** (*Pablo Larraín*)

Because it offers an oblique yet terrifying take on political repression in Latin America.

Highlights: Todd Haynes's miniseries for HBO, Mildred Pierce, because sometimes the best cinema is made for television.

FERNANDA SOLORZANO

Critic. Mexico

Melancholia (Lars von Trier) Miss Bala (Gerardo Naranjo) There's the fear of becoming the victim of a drug war and then there's the fear of falling prey to indescribable evil. Miss Bala

addresses the latter, becoming the first Mexican film on the subject to break down the defences of audiences throughout the

The Deep Blue Sea (Terence Davies, UK) Making the best of its theatrical origins in Terence Rattigan's play, Davies's mise en scène relies on intensity to make its point: the language and gestures of passion are anything but mundane.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Werner Herzog) Highlights: Attending the premiere of Juan Carlos Rulfo's Carrière: 250 metros at the recent San Sebastian Film Festival was the subject of the film - the French screenwriter Jean-Claude Carrière. As the Q&A session opened, an innocent-looking woman asked a fearless question: how could he say he was as an atheist when the film clearly stated his spiritual tendencies? Carrière took the bull by the horns and delighted us with stories from his trips to India, his conversations about degrees of separation with director Peter Brook (for whom he adapted The Mahabharata) and his current obsession with discovering the "plot" of his life. At that point, the ghost of Carrière's lifelong friend made his presence felt: Luis Buñuel, a self-proclaimed atheist who created masterpieces out of his denial of God.

BRAD STEVENS

Film socialisme (Jean-Luc Godard, Switzerland/France)

Godard remains among the wiliest of cinematic jokers, but film and socialism are two things he still takes very seriously.

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Hereafter (Clint Eastwood, USA)

You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger

(Woody Allen, Spain/USA/UK)
Where Malick makes the concrete abstract, Eastwood makes the abstract concrete. Hereafter's concern is with the spiritual area of transition between life and death, accompanied by a visual emphasis on more worldly areas of transition (doorways, corridors, stairs, tunnels). Given the already plentiful connections between Eastwood and Woody Allen, it is nice to see their directorial quests to escape from rigidly defined (and specifically American) star images depositing them both in London, which they film in ways that might serve as object lessons for native British directors.

Highlights: BFI Southbank's Edward Yang retrospective. Why masterpieces such as That Day, on the Beach and Taipei Story are

HEATHER STEWART

A Separation (Asqhar Farhadi) Shame (Steve McQueen) Las acacias (Pablo Giorgelli) Senna (Asif Kapadia)

We Need to Talk About Kevin (Lynne Ramsay)

Highlights: Tacita Dean's FILM, Tate Modern; death by lift-shaft in *The First Born*; Michael Fassbender, looking, moving, acting; Kore-eda's direction of children; the quartet in Carnage; rewatching the TV versions of Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy and Smiley's People on DVD; Ulrich Köhler's take on post-colonial Africa; Uggy the dog.

AMY TAUBIN

Artforum', USA

Melancholia (Lars von Trier) A Dangerous Method (David Cronenberg)

This Is Not a Film (Jafar Panahi & Mojtaba Mirtahmasb)

Contagion (Steven Soderbergh) J. Edgar (Clint Eastwood, USA) Highlights: In no particular order: the electrifying slo-mo opening and cathartic

tragic closing of Melancholia; watching photojournalist Tim Hetherington's 22minute Diary (2010) online a day after his untimely death and marvelling how the struggle to find himself in the other and the other in himself could be accomplished without ego and as if for the first time; philosopher and former filmmaker Manuel De Landa's madly-brilliant-for-seeming-sorational lectures on Gilles Deleuze, as viewed on YouTube.

DAVID THOMPSON

Critic, UK

Pina (Wim Wenders)

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick) Senna (Asif Kapadia)

Poetry (Lee Chang-dong)

Highlights: Despite noises that it's all over, the continuing appearance of outstanding DVD/Blu-ray editions from people who care, such as Criterion, Masters of Cinema and this year especially the BFI for Deep End and French Cancan.

The Quays' sublime film I Looked Back When I Reached Halfway, accompanied by Alina Ibragimova playing Bartok's 'Sonata for Solo Violin' at Wilton's Music Hall – a perfect marriage of image and music.

Working in Paris on a documentary about Maurice Pialat's A nos amours affirmed that he was one of the cinema's true greats - and that Sandrine Bonnaire is as luminous in reality as on the screen.

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius)

A Separation (Asqhar Farhadi)

unavailable on DVD remains a mystery.

DEEP END: "the continuing appearance of outstanding DVD/Blu-rays"

GINETTE VINCENDEAU

The Conquest (La Conquête)

(Xavier Durringer, France)

The Kid with a Bike (Jean-Pierre & Luc Dardenne)

Potiche (François Ozon, France/Belgium)

Midnight in Paris (Woody Allen)

The Artist (Michel Hazanavicius) Highlights: The highlights this year were not linked to new releases but to my research. Co-editing a book on Renoir I 'had to' look at many of the films again. Watching Toni and Les Bas-fonds in particular reminded me of why I started doing research in film. Writing a book on Brigitte Bardot, I'discovered' her more or less forgotten comedies. They're not all masterpieces but, especially in the early years, they are fresh and modern (Cette

sacrée gamine and Une parisienne, in particular), and unlike her more famous melodramas (such as Le Mépris or Vie privée), they don't kill her off at the end!

PETER VON BAGH

Critic and programmer, Finland

In our times only few significant film experiences happen in regular screenings, and I will only mention two of them: Essential Killing (Jerzy Skolimowski)

Le Havre (Aki Kaurismäki)

Highlights: Blu-ray is one compensation for classics vanishing in their true form. I was spellbound by Criterion's The Complete Jean Vigo, especially one bonus detail I hadn't seen before: the discussion between Rohmer and Truffaut about L'Atalante.

CATHERINE WHEATLEY

Academic and critic. UK

Archipelago (Joanna Hogg)

The Tree of Life (Terrence Malick)

We Have a Pope (Habemus Papam) (Nanni Moretti, Italy/France)

Le quattro volte

(Michelangelo Frammartino)

Hors Satan (Bruno Dumont)

Highlight: Participating in Sight & Sound's competition to discover new female film-writing talent. There were some outstanding entries and we found a worthy winner. Here's hoping this marks something of a turning-point for a field of journalism in which women's voices are still woefully underrepresented.

ARMOND WHITE

'New York Post', US

Incendies (Denis Villeneuve, Canada/France) This moving post-9/11 vision of our connectivity simultaneously recalls Greek tragedy and the epic-intimate miracles of 1970s American films.

Rise of the Planet of the Apes (Rupert Wyatt, USA/Hungary/UK/Australia/Canada) A spirited rethink of the 1968 original captures the vengeful madness of our times - confirmation that movies can be pop and still be art.

Attack the Block (Joe Cornish) Paul (Greg Mottola, USA/UK/Japan) Nick Frost and Simon Pegg come to America and find more fun and depth than ever before in our pop-culture and sci-fi heritage.

Film socialisme (Jean-Luc Godard) Highlight: You'd expect a publishing boom about a film critic to be a heartening occasion. Think again: this year's biography of Pauline Kael and a high-toned collection of her writing has instead revealed the sorry, fractious state of contemporary film commentary as critics bash her and her legacy. Kael's way of taking movies personally as a part of a humanist tradition is no longer apparent in the current stumbling into nihilism that pervades the festival circuit and passes for contemporary film culture.



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THE STORY OF FILM: Five copies of film book to be won

To coincide with film journalist Mark Cousins's fascinating 15hour TV documentary The Story of Film, airing on More4, his original book of the same name (published by Pavilion) has received an update. In it Cousins assesses how filmmakers are influenced by the historical events of their time and

by each other, citing for instance, the influence of Douglas Sirk's melodramas on Fassbinder's despairing visions of 1970s Germany. Writing in an accessible style, Cousins places himself as moviegoer and asks: "How does a scene or a story affect us, and why?"

We have five copies to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. In which Douglas Sirk film does Rock **Hudson play the character Mitch Wayne?**

- a. Magnificent Obsession b. Written on the Wind
- c. The Tarnished Angels



THEO ANGELOPOULOS:

Three volumes of films to be won

Greek director Theo Angelopoulos has earned an international arthouse following and his films often examine the history of modern Greece from a social and political perspective. Artificial Eye collect his vast body of work across three volumes, which include: The Reconstruction, Days of '36, The Hunters, Alexander the Great, The Beekeeper, Ulysses' Gaze, Eternity and a Day and The Weeping Meadow. We have two sets of all three volumes to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. Which Angelopoulos film stars actor Harvey Keitel?

- a. Eternity and a Day b. The Beekeeper
- c. Ulysses' Gaze





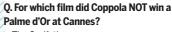




FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA: Collection of films to be won

StudioCanal celebrate Francis Ford Coppola with a selection of films from the 1970s to 1980s that he directed and/or produced. His acclaimed psychological thriller The Conversation is on Blu-ray, while the coming-of-age tale The Outsiders makes its UK premiere in a collector's edition Blu-ray. Romantic drama One from the Heart, The Escape Artist and detective story Hammett (directed by Wim Wenders) are all also UK DVD premieres. We have five sets to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:



- a. The Godfather
- b. The Conversation
- c. Apocalypse Now









WORLD FILM LOCATIONS: Three sets of books to be won

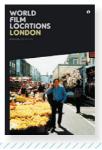
This new series of books from Intellect explores the relationship between city and cinema by using a predominantly visual approach alongside short essays about carefully chosen film scenes. Films given attention in these three on London, New York and Tokyo include Performance, The Warriors and Godzilla, among many others.

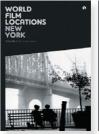
We have five sets to give away.

To be in with a chance of winning, please answer the following question:

Q. Which one of these cities features in Jim Jarmusch's 'Night on Earth'?

- a. New York
- b. London
- c. Tokyo







HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'Theo Angelopoulos box-sets', 'Francis Ford Coppola DVDs', 'The Story of Film books' or 'World Film Locations books' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk

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- *The BFI may wish to contact you to keep you informed of future events. Please indicate on your email/postcard if you do not wish to hear from the BFI regarding any other BFI promotions or news

Nov 2011 issue winners: 'The Tree of Life' DVDs/Blu-rays – Carlos Antunes, Alan Bayley, Mario Cassar,

Daniel Milner, Rachael Smith.

Kurosawa Akira Collections – Mark Butler, James McLoughlin.

Drew Struzan: Oeuvre' books – Harvey Salmon, Kieran Symons, Connie Turner.

'Cinema: The Whole Story' books – Andrea Aspell, Tahir Hussain, Austin McHale, Liam Rodger, Amelia Royle.

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ALICE Jan Svankmajer, (1988)

Jan Svankmajer's
'Alice' is a creepy and
disturbing adaptation of
Lewis Carroll's original
version. Combining a
live-action Alice with a
stop-motion Wonderland
filled with threatening,
bizarre characters, the
film brilliantly marries sly
visual wit with piercing
psychological insight.



DEEP ENDJerzy Skolimowski, (1970)

Newly employed at a run-down London swimming baths, Mike obsesses over his sassy co-worker, played by Jane Asher. Darkly comic and utterly compelling, this newly restored, high-definition print is a portrait of Britain in an era of uncertainty.



DIANA DORS DOUBLE BILL Maurice Elvey, (1952-53)

'Is Your Honeymoon Really Necessary?' is a juicy bedroom farce in which Dors plays the stunning ex who unexpectedly comes back into the life of an American serviceman. In 'My Wife's Lodger' a hapless soldier returns home to find his wife has taken in a boarder.



LATE AUTUMN Ozu Yasujiro, (1960)

A group of middle-aged businessmen matchmake for the widow of one of their friends and her daughter. One of Ozu's finest postwar films, 'Late Autumn' moves effortlessly from comedy to pathos. Also on the disc is his moving silent drama 'A Mother Should Be Loved'.

Offer expires 31 Dec 2011. For all subscriptions ordered before 6 Dec 2011 the subscription will begin with the Feb 2012 issue (mailed 30 Dec 2011). Please note that DVDs of 'Alice' and 'Deep End' are Region 0 encoded, and 'Diana Dors Double Bill' and 'Late Autumn' are Region 2.

With 'The Artist', a loving tribute to silent-era Hollywood, Michel Hazanavicius puts his money where his mouth is — by making a silent movie. He talks to **James Bell**. Overleaf, **Bryony Dixon** looks at how silent stars coped with sound

THE SOUND OF SILENTS

STAR ATTRACTION

The fall of silent star George Valentin (Jean Dujardin), opposite and below with Zimmer (John Goodman), is set against the rise of Peppy Miller (Bérénice Bejo, reading 'Variety')







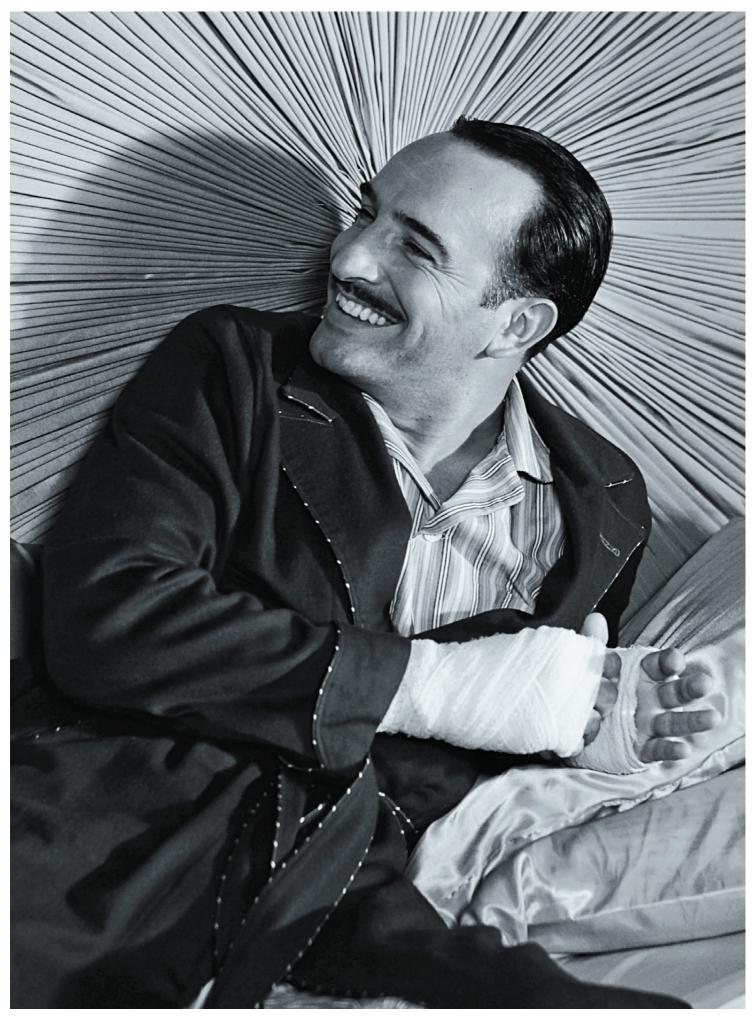
ur first introduction to dashing movie star George Valentin comes in appropriately derring-do fashion. He is being tortured into confession by two Russian baddies, who are sending ever-increasing surges of electricity through his immaculately moustachioed head. "Talk!" they demand. "I will not! I will not speak!" comes his reply, which we read as onscreen intertitles. He holds out, before breaking free with the help of his faithful Jack Russell terrier, rescuing a blonde dame in distress and eluding the Russians in a high-speed chase.

Then midway through the action we take a step back and see that we're actually watching the silent film – a vaulting, Douglas Fairbanks-style action picture titled A Russian Affair – along with an enraptured 1927 audience in a grand picture palace. Behind the screen, the real Valentin (Jean Dujardin) paces beside his wife and co-star Doris (Penelope Ann Miller) and Kinograph studio head Zimmer (John Goodman). They're listening out for the audience's reactions at the end - will they laugh? Cry? Gasp? But we can only tell that they're applauding from the physical reactions of those behind the screen - for French director Michel Hazanavicius's The Artist is itself a silent film, set just before the coming of sound at the end of the 1920s. And, as the scene from A Russian Affair hints, Valentin will be one of the many casualties of the transition.

"It wasn't easy to think of an introduction that would make people accept that they were in a silent movie," says Hazanavicius, formerly best known for having made the two successful OSS 117 spy spoofs, Cairo: Nest of Spies (Le Caire, nid d'espions, 2006) and Lost in Rio (Rio ne répond plus, 2009), both major hits in France. "But usually in action sequences you don't need dialogue. Then after, when we go into the theatre, we hear the music but also see the orchestra, so people can place it. Then there is a silence, and we see the lead character hearing something that we don't hear, but then we see a crowded theatre bursting into applause. I didn't anticipate it being such a funny moment, but in every screening I've been in, people laugh. This is where people accept that they're looking at a silent movie."

Whatever else it may be, *The Artist* is certainly a consummate and charming crowd-pleaser – one that looks poised to become a hit with mainstream audiences, despite the fact that the experience of watching a silent film will be a new one for many. At the screening I attended, people broke into spontaneous applause and laughter throughout, and the film has already been a big hit in France. With the persuasive and vocal might of its US distributor Harvey Weinstein behind it, it's even being talked of as an Oscar candidate come next March.

Through its behind-the-scenes story, *The Artist* reintroduces the particular characteristics and stories of silent cinema to modern audiences – or at least a selective idea of what Hollywood cinema was in the silent era, one that draws heavily on later nostalgic fantasies like *Singin'* in the Rain (1952). It's a film about the cinema, a rise-and-fall story about a young actress on the ascent and an older man in decline that's immediately familiar from *A Star Is Born*, in all its versions, or *What Price Hollywood?*(1932).



Michel Hazanavicius The Artist

Just as George Valentin is sitting comfortably at the height of his career in 1927, he quite literally bumps into aspiring starlet Peppy Miller (Bérénice Bejo) after a premiere. In a scene that riffs on the plucked-from-obscurity myth that has served so many — from Lana Turner in real life to Janet Gaynor and Judy Garland in the first two versions of *A Star Is Born*—Peppy drops her purse after being jostled back into the waiting crowd by police. She ducks under the policeman's arm and finds herself face-to-face with Valentin, in full glare of the assembled press photographers. Seizing the moment, she plants a kiss on his cheek, and the front-page headline of the next day's *Variety* asks, "Who's that girl?"

They meet again when Peppy is cast as a dancing extra in another of Valentin's Fairbanks-esque swashbucklers, *The German Affair* (after she charms a megaphone-touting casting director who, dressed in cloth cap, bow tie, v-neck and knee breeches, is surely a visual tribute to FW. Murnau). Valentin is smitten, but it's not long before Peppy is a star in her own right – and one in the ascendant, while Valentin's fame is seemingly on a terminal wane after the coming of sound.

The desire to make a silent film is one Hazanavicius had harboured for over ten years before the production finally got off the ground, during which time he had neither the confidence in himself as a director nor the industry clout to make it happen — until the success of the OSS 117 films gave him greater freedom to choose projects. Nonetheless, persuading people to invest in a silent movie proved a tall order. Ironically, he and producer Thomas Langmann (best known for the two Mesrine films) were seeking funding just at the time when Avatar was sweeping all before it and promising a new 3D dawn.

"When I spoke to producers about my desire to make a silent film, they didn't take it seriously," Hazanavicius recalls. "They would say, 'OK, but what would you really like to do?' I was very lucky to meet Thomas Langmann." Back then Hazanavicius had only a vague conception of the story he wanted to make, and Langmann initially tried to push him in another direction. "He wanted to make a version of *Fantômas*," the director recalls, referring to the silent Louis Feuillade films about a master jewel thief. "But he wanted to make a high-

tech <code>Fantômas</code>, set in 2020. It sounded exciting, but it wasn't what I wanted to do. I wanted to make a silent movie! Eventually I said, 'OK, I will do <code>Fantômas</code>, but I'll do the real one with the black tuxedo and the top hat, and I'll do it silent.' He looked at me as though I was crazy, but I described two sequences to him, and I could see in his eyes that he was hooked. He called me later to say that we couldn't do <code>Fantômas</code>, but if I really wanted to do a silent movie then he would follow me."

At that stage Hazanavicius had a number of ideas for the script, including one that set the story in Berlin, with the central character a Fritz Langlike figure. "Ilove German silent cinema. I thought it would be interesting to place the action in Berlin, because the movie could start with expressionism and finish with the arrival of the Nazis, which was parallel with the coming of sound," he says. "But I didn't think I could ask people to come to see a silent, black-and-white French movie and make it so sad. I said, 'No, I have to entertain the audience!' — so I felt I had to set the story in Hollywood. The real star of the story is Hollywood."

What price Hollywood?

Of course, setting the film in Hollywood ideally also meant going there to shoot it—something that came at a price. "I felt I had to shoot the film in Los Angeles, but then it's easy for a director to say that," says Hazanavicius. "It's more difficult for a producer to say, 'OK, but that will cost me an extra one million euros.' It was courageous of Thomas [Langmann]. He put his own money into it. Then the really fun part was scouting for locations. For someone like me who loves cinema, it was the 'I love cinema' tour."

It's hardly surprising, then, that *The Artist* is packed with allusions and tributes to Hollywood. Among the many recognisable locations in the film are the stairs of the Bradbury Building, a place

'I regret that the talkies came maybe ten years too soon. The late silent era was a utopia of a sort' made iconic by its appearance in movies from *DOA* to *Blade Runner*. As Valentin walks down the stairs after another failed meeting with his studio boss, he passes a beaming Peppy on her way up. "Stairs are a motif in the film," says Hazanavicius. "The story is about a guy who's falling and a girl who's rising, and he spends half the movie going down the stairs, while she goes up."

The Bradbury Building also allows another tribute: the wide shot of the stairs spanning three floors that opens the scene recalls a similar shot of the stairs to Charles Farrell's garret in Frank Borzage's 7th Heaven(1927)—one of Hazanavicius's favourite films. He pays another affectionate tribute to it in the scene where Peppy, visiting Valentin's dressing room, spots his jacket hanging on a stand; she reaches her arm into the sleeve and caresses her own side as though held in his arms. It's a racier update of a magical scene in 7th Heaven in which Janet Gaynor drapes Charles Farrell's jacket over the back of her chair and protectively wraps the sleeves around her shoulders.

"Lots of people have told me, 'Oh, that's a wonderful sequence!' And I always say, 'Well, really it's Frank Borzage you should thank," admits Hazanavicius, talking animatedly about the glories of the late silent-era Hollywood, when the dramatic arrival of F.W. Murnau in America led to the apogee of silent-film art with the production of Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (1927), and the decisive influence its 'unchaining of the camera' had on such filmmakers as Borzage, Raoul Walsh, King Vidor, Howard Hawks and John Ford. "I'm not so nostalgic that I think it's a shame that we have talking movies - of course it's not as simple as that," he continues. "But I can regret that the talkies came maybe ten years too soon. If they'd come ten years later, we would have had many more [silent] masterpieces, I'm sure. The sophistication of the movies made in the last four, five years of the silent era was remarkable. The late silent era was a utopia of a sort – a universal language, like painting or music can be."

Hazanavicius pointed his cast and crew in the direction of a dozen key silent films for research, among them Murnau's *Sunrise* and *City Girl*(1929), Chaplin's *City Lights*(1931), King Vidor's *The Crowd* (1927) and John Ford's *Four Sons* (1928). But as it turns out, in the finished film the stylistic

SILENT TRIBUTES

The pioneers of silent cinema have continued to provide subjects for filmmakers in the age of sound



Singin' in the Rain

Stanley Donen & Gene Kelly (1952)

MGM's immortal classic has done more than any other film to cement the legend of the mass culling of out-of-date stars at the end of the silent era. Kelly's Don Lockwood makes the jump to sound, and into the arms of Debbie Reynolds's Kathy, while Jean Hagen, his onscreen 'lover' Lina Lamont, just 'cayn't'.



Flickers

Cyril Coke (1980)

Written by Roy Clarke, this six-part 1980 British TV series stars Bob Hoskins as Arnie Cole, a film exhibitor in the early silent era who dreams of making his own pictures. Frances de la Tour plays Hoskins's wife, alongside an ensemble cast who portray a variety of characters from the world of early cinema.

influence of these late-period silent films is hardly discernable, except in a couple of allusions to their expressive techniques and in-camera effects — and arguably in the same lack of cynicism towards the characters you find in Borzage's work. Instead, the films-within-the-film we see starring George Valentin are Fairbanks-style swashbucklers (there's even a direct interpolation of a clip from Fairbanks's 1920 *The Mark of Zorro*), while there's a touch of Mack Sennett in the scene in which Peppy races in her car to save a suicidal Valentin.

Beyond touches such as the authentic 1920s reel-change markers, most of the film isn't shot in a noticeably 1920s style. *The Artist* offers a broadbrush idea of silent cinema that may upset some purists, but Hazanavicius insists that he felt no obligation to remain scrupulously faithful to the 1920s in production design or cinematography; his intention was to make a modern popular entertainment, but make it silent — and above all to allow for the sensory experience and pleasure of watching a silent film with an audience.

"There's no dialogue, no sound design, so as an audience you really take part in the storytelling process," he explains. "You bring your own dialogue, your own accents, your own sound design. It makes the story much closer." The intention was also to pay tribute to a range of classic Hollywood films. Alongside the tributes to silent films, for instance, are a couple of explicit homages to Citizen Kane: in an ongoing breakfast-table scene between Valentin and his increasingly frosty actress wife, and a scene of studio executives in a dark, smoke-filled screening room, lit only by the beam of light from the projector. They're watching Valentin's wife Doris awkwardly recite, "Romeo, Romeo. Wherefore art thou, Romeo?" in an onscreen sound test. "If that's the future," scoffs Valentin (via intertitles, of course), "you can keep it!" - and then one can't help but hear Norma Desmond exclaiming 20 years into the future, "We didn't need dialogue. We had faces!"

"The main thing was to tell the story," says Hazanavicius. "I took some liberties with the shooting: for example, the sequence when George Valentin discovers sound is very 40s lighting, with a very strong backlight and marked shadows. I talked to the cinematographer about it and said, "This is quite like the beginning sequence of *Citizen*



GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN
The above scene in 'The Artist' in which Peppy
hugs Valentin's jacket quotes a similar moment
with Janet Gaynor, right, in 1927's '7th Heaven'

Kane where they've just seen the News on the March! newsreel.' The cinematographer said, 'But it's not silent light at all, it's 40s!" But that was what I wanted to tell the story. It's a small liberty. Yes, I wanted people to say it's an hommage to the silent cinema — and it is — but it's also an hommage to all the classical Hollywood movies. There are references to Kane, to Sunset Blvd., to Singin' in the Rain... to all sorts of movies. I had no problem stealing a sequence if it helped to tell the story!"

Another 'liberty', as far as silent purists might be concerned, is the fact that *The Artist* was shot using colour film stock, and only converted to black and white in post-production. As Hazanavicius explains, "We did a lot of tests and found that [colour stock] was the best. Everybody talks about black and white, but I always thought of greys. I said to my cinematographer that I wanted greys, and that if we had high-contrast black and white, then it had to mean something. The idea was that when the characters are at the top, everything is very contrasted black and white: black tuxedo and top hat, white shirt. But when either character is at



a lower ebb, the backgrounds are greyer, with much less contrast. We did a lot of tests, and black-and-white film didn't allow us to work on that as precisely as colour stock. The softness of the colour stock gave us the nuances of grey we were after."

But making the film silent threw up other challenges that couldn't be fixed in post-production: the whole question of telling a story without dialogue. "Finding a structure to the story was exactly the same," Hazanavicius says. "What was different was anticipating that the story had to be told with certain kind of sequences - remembering that you cannot tell the story using dialogue. There was a lot I had to relearn about film grammar. I watched a lot of silent films just to understand the rules. At the beginning, I was very much influenced by Murnau, and there are practically no intertitles in his greatest films [1924's The Last Laugh famously has only one intertitle]. So at first I wanted to only use the very minimum of titles, but then I changed my mind, because I think the intertitles are a part of the pleasure of watching a silent movie today. So I even put some 'unnecessary' titles in, just because they were amusing.

"I found it freeing doing a silent movie," he continues. "There are a lot of things that I allowed myself to do, which I'm quite sure I wouldn't have



Good Morning Babylon

Paolo & Vittorio Taviani (1987)

Set designers seldom find themselves at the centre of the narrative, but this follows two Tuscan stonemason brothers who travel to America when the family church-restoring firm goes bust, and work for D.W. Griffith (Charles Dance) building monumental elephants for the Bablyon set of 'Intolerance'.



A Trick of the Light

Wim Wenders & Sebastian Andrae (1996)

Made to celebrate the centenary of cinema, this is a tribute to the Skladanowsky brothers, whose 1895 demonstration of the 'Bioskop' claimed to have predated the Lumières. Playful silent sequences with Udo Kier as Max Skladanowsky are intercut with the reminiscences of the real Max's daughter, Gertrud.



Shadow of the Vampire

E. Elias Merhige (2000)

This fictionalised account of the making of 'Nosferatu' is based on the premise that F.W. Murnau (John Malkovich) knowingly cast a real vampire, Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe), as the star of his film – with disastrous consequences for his cast and crew. Dafoe and his make-up both received Oscar nominations.

Michel Hazanavicius The Artist

➡ if it was a sound film. The oneiric sequence, for example, when Valentin fantasises seeing his miniature self on the bar. It's a way to illustrate his internal conflicts, and you can show it as simply as that in a silent movie: him against himself. You'd really be taking a chance of seeming ridiculous if you were to do that in a sound film, unless you're a Fellini or an Almodóvar – they can do that because their film universe allows for such sequences."

One particularly funny sequence in *The Artist* visualises a nightmare of Valentin's in which the world around him carries on in deafening sound—the mere placing of a glass on a table causing him to flinch—while he's rendered mute. "I really liked the idea, because in a normal movie when someone puts down a glass, you hear nothing," explains Hazanavicius. "Also, by this point in the movie, the convention is silence, so when you break the convention—even if it's something everyday like putting down a glass—it's funny."

An inspiration for Hazanavicius's use of sound came from the early sound experiments of former silent directors such as Fritz Lang, in M(1931), or René Clair, in A nous la liberté(1931). "Silent movies didn't ape reality, it was an abstraction," he explains. "So when the most creative silent directors — Lang and Clair and others — started to use sound, they used it in a similar way: they made collages, they used sound as they had used images. They experimented — they were really free. But nearly everybody in mainstream cinema went in the same direction from a certain point: to be realistic and to ape reality — except people like Fellini or Jacques Tati, of course."

The lack of dialogue in The Artist means that a great deal depends on the expressiveness of the performances. For the secondary roles, Hazanavicius mostly cast American actors, among them John Goodman and James Cromwell, but the film was written with the two leads in mind: Jean Dujardin had worked with him on both OSS 117 films, while Bérénice Bejo (who was also in Cairo: Nest of Spies) is the director's wife. Both clearly relish the roles, and Dujardin picked up the Best Actor prize at Cannes this year for his efforts. As well as mimicking an expressive silent form of acting, both actors also had months of dance training to master an extended tap-dance sequence, which would have undermined the whole climax of the film had it not convinced.

"I told the actors I wouldn't over-cut," says Hazanavicius. "I wouldn't use a close-up of them smiling, and then a close-up of their teacher's feet, dancing very well, and then a very short wide shot. It's not *Chicago*! Fred Astaire once said: 'Either the camera will dance, or I will."

There have been optimistic claims by some that the success of *The Artist* might lead to a resurgent popular interest in silent cinema, with audiences inspired to discover its many pleasures. That remains to be seen. Whether or not Hazanavicius's film will endure as a tribute to silent cinema, it's a great piece of entertainment. And if it does lead even some of that audience to discover Borzage or Murnau or Fairbanks for the first time, then so much the better.

The Artist' is released on 30 December, and is reviewed on page 63

LIFE AFTER SOUND

Were silent movie stars really scuppered by sound? It's a myth, finds **Bryony Dixon**

Phoebe Dinsmore: [giving elocution lesson]

Repeat after me: tah, tey, tee, toe, too.

Lina Lamont: Tah, tey, tye, tow, tyo.

PD: No, no, no Miss Lamont. Round tones, round tones. Now, let me hear you read your line.

LL: And I cayn't staynd 'im.

PD: And I can't stand him.

LL: And I cayn't staynd 'im.

PD: Can't.

LL: Cayn't...

This is the myth of the transition from silent cinema to the talkies, familiar to us from the famous scene in 'Singin' in the Rain' (1952). One day in 1927, 'The Jazz Singer' arrives; the next, the great stars of silent film are threatened with losing their jobs. Elocution teachers do their darnedest with elegant damsels with a Bronx honk or smoulderingly handsome devils who squeak like a schoolboy; careers are lost but also made as the rising stars who not only talk but can sing and dance wait in the wings... This myth has long been dismissed by the film historians – and yet it persists. A cursory Google finds this example:

"Many stars of the silent era with heavy accents and disagreeable voices saw their careers shattered (e.g., Polish-accented Pola Negri, Emil Jannings, Ramon Novarro, Clara Bow... and John Gilbert), while others like Joan Crawford, Paul Muni, Greta Garbo, Ronald Colman, Lon Chaney, Sr., Richard Barthelmess and Gloria Swanson survived the transition – but elocution lessons from diction coaches became a necessity for some." (www.filmsite.org/20sintro4.html)

This is fairly typical and – in the way of the internet – inaccurate and much copied. The names given for those whose careers didn't survive are sometimes interchangeable with those who did. Gloria Swanson, for example, either did – or didn't – survive the transition, according to which version of the myth you read, before ironically (or not) making a comeback in the character of Norma Desmond, the silent-screen goddess in 'Sunset Blvd.' (1950) who delivers that great line: "We didn't need dialogue, we had faces." Clearly there was nothing wrong with her voice.

But what of the most famous fall from MGM's firmament of stars, that of John Gilbert? His downward trajectory was made more poignant by



GARBO AND GILBERT: 'FLESH AND THE DEVIL'

his early death and the contrast with the continued rise of his frequent co-star and ex-lover, Greta Garbo. Her first talkie was marketed with the slogan "Garbo talks", as if announcing some kind of miracle, and she went on to star in many successful films written specially for her, such as 'Mata Hari' (1931), in which her Swedish accent was catered for by casting her as a foreigner. So the accent wasn't necessarily a bar. In 1933, now established as a great talkie star, she played opposite John Gilbert in 'Queen Christina'. "Hold on," I hear you say. "Is that the same John Gilbert whose career was 'shattered' because of his dodgy voice, playing opposite Garbo in a major sound film – six years after 'The Jazz Singer'?" Hmm... Back to Google.

The great thing about the internet is that, as well as throwing up the oft-repeated myth, it also delivers the means of debunking it. The most perfunctory search reveals that many of the names in the list above, such as Clara Bow and Ramón Novarro, made several sound films: think of Bow in 'Call Her Savage' (1932). Some had quite long careers - not always in Hollywood, for such non-Americans as Pola Negri and Emil Jannings, but careers nonetheless: Negri in 'Madame Bovary' (1937) and 'The Moon-Spinners' (1964); Jannings, of course, in 'The Blue Angel' (1930). Some stars such as Norma Talmadge, Colleen Moore and Mary Pickford took the opportunity to jump because they were getting older, or were rich enough not to bother adjusting to the new techniques of acting in sound pictures; other expensive or uncooperative stars were pushed.

John Gilbert was probably one of the latter; one extreme theory alleges that Lionel Barrymore was instructed by a vengeful Louis B. Mayer to sabotage Gilbert's career in his first talkie – 1929's 'His Glorious Night' – by making him sound highpitched and ridiculous. Each individual's story is always more complex than the myth allows for, but very few stars, it seems, had their career ruined simply because of their voice.

Tapping in the name of a silent-film star into YouTube plus the word 'talks', à la Garbo, is revealing. So 'John Gilbert talks' reveals a clip from 'The Hollywood Revue of 1929', showing a comic sketch starring Gilbert and Norma Shearer playing the balcony scene from 'Romeo and Juliet', which they then render in modern parlance on the instruction of the studio management, who don't like the "old-fashioned" dialogue. It's funny; Gilbert is charming and his voice is absolutely fine. And the director is played by Lionel Barrymore.

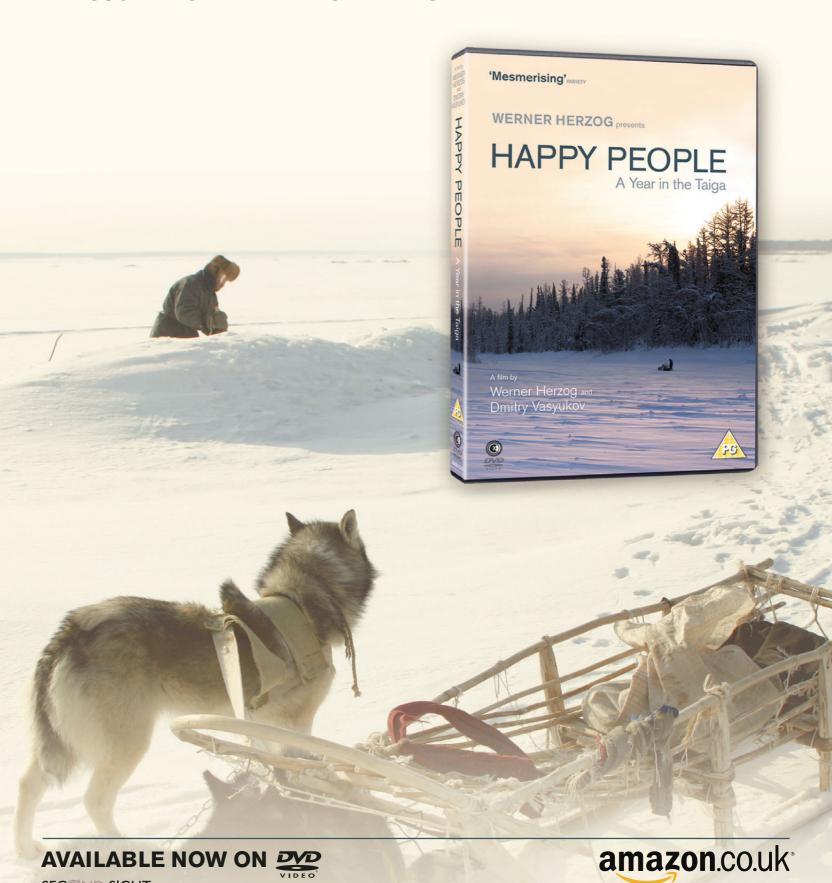
Interestingly, in the same film, the entire rostrum of MGM stars (with the exception of Garbo) appear to dance and sing (which apparently they could) in a musical number, new at the time, called 'Singin' in the Rain'. The reductiveness of the 'Singin' in the Rain' scenario masks a much more fascinating story about the transition from silent to sound cinema – one that's germane to our own age of media evolution.

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THE MAGIC TOYSHOP In the new film from Martin Scorsese, above right, Hugo (Asa Butterfield, centre) discovers former film pioneer Georges Méliès (Ben Kingsley, both pics opposite) running a toy stall

ILLUSIONIST

Martin Scorsese's 'Hugo' is not just a 3D adaptation of a hit children's book, but a magical tribute to the early days of cinema that gives scope to his fervour as a film historian. By lan Christie t's not difficult to see what attracted Martin Scorsese to the story of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Brian Selznick's fictionalised account of the rediscovery of film pioneer Georges Méliès, or what must have flashed into his imagination – a chance to recreate the wonder of early moving pictures as a very modern spectacle in digital 3D. The result – certainly the most expensive and elaborate attempt ever to dramatise the birth of the movies – is a bold gamble by Graham King and his fellow producers. Coming at a time when the viability of 3D is once again in question, it's up against both more extreme and more conventional treats in the third dimension.

There's also the question of its relationship to film history. Scorsese is famously both a hands-on historian of cinema, with his own vast print collection and encyclopedic knowledge, and a tireless campaigner for the cause of film restoration. Ever since he led a crusade against Eastman Kodak's fading colour stock in the 1980s, Scorsese has insisted that today's commercial industry should recognise its responsibility towards cinema's past and its own future. The durability of colour stock has improved, although it still cannot guarantee that films will not fade, any more than can digital storage can. (Only black-and-white separations can reliably preserve the palette of a colour film.)

So the central drama of *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* is certainly close to Scorsese's heart. Selznick's prizewinning graphic novel started from the fact that one of the pioneers of film magic, Méliès, was 'rediscovered' at the age of 65 as the proprietor of a modest toy and sweet stall at the Gare Montparnasse in Paris. What followed was





Martin Scorsese Hugo



OFF THE RAILS In a lovingly recreated Gare Montparnasse, Hugo and Isabelle (Chloë Grace Moretz, centre) dodge the Station Inspector (Sacha Baron Cohen)

indeed like a fairytale. Long believed dead, Méliès emerged from obscurity following his chance discovery by the editor of a film magazine, Léon Druhot, and went on to be honoured, first by a gala screening of his few surviving films at the Salle Pleyel in 1929, and eventually by the award of the Legion d'honneur in 1931. The story goes that after Chaplin had received the honour, national pride required a similar gesture towards a French pioneer. So Louis Lumière, long recognised as the 'inventor' of cinema, was called upon to formalise the state's belated recognition of the would-be filmmaker he had spurned 35 years earlier. There was even a 'happily ever after', with Méliès living for another seven years at the film industry's retirement home in Orly with his second wife and granddaughter.

But this is also a story of film discovery and restoration. Only a handful of the more than 500 films made by Méliès between 1896 and 1913 were known during the 1930s, since most prints had either been melted down for their silver or celluloid scrap value, or simply junked as having no commercial worth. But since then, and with accelerating frequency, more have been discovered and shown, especially at the annual silent-film festival in Pordenone, Italy. Most, though, have survived only as dupe copies in black and white, while in his heyday Méliès's films were widely available in hand-painted colour versions. By a remarkable coincidence, his most famous film - the 1902 A Trip to the Moon (Le Voyage dans la lune), which Selznick made central to his story - has just undergone an expensive restoration based on a surviving colour print, and was seen at the Cannes, Bologna and London festivals earlier this year.

Scorsese's Hugo builds towards a climactic reconstruction of Méliès at work in the glasshouse studio he built in the Parisian suburb of Montreuil in the late 1890s, with Ben Kingsley - hitherto seen only as the disillusioned older veteran – shown as the protean actor-director of his glory years in the early 1900s, bringing fairy-tale and pantomime subjects to life by means of stopmotion effects applied to the stagecraft of the period. Actors freeze while the props are changed and pyrotechnics set, to achieve the novel stopmotion effects that made Méliès one of the most successful brands of early 'animated pictures'. And taking advantage of the restoration of A Trip to the Moon, along with other choice moments from Méliès's Star Films catalogue, Scorsese plunges us into a kaleidoscopic celebration of Méliès as pioneer cinema magician – the patron saint of all filmmakers aspiring to create a self-sufficient fantasy world.

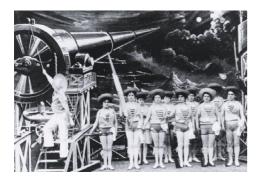
This isn't the first time that Scorsese the film historian has tried to take us behind the scenes while also preserving the illusion. Already in Casino (1995) - which coincided with his first venture into film history in A Personal Journey Through American Cinema - the backstage workings of Las Vegas were shown alongside the tacky glamour of the gaming floor. And for his treatment of Howard Hughes as a filmmaker in *The Aviator* (2004), Scorsese painstakingly 'reverse engineered' the famous flying scenes of 1930's Hell's Angels to show these being filmed, while the early part of that film almost subliminally mimicked the tonality of early Technicolor, to bring us closer to what audiences might have seen at the beginning of the 1930s.

With Méliès, the question of perspective is more acute. His films were rediscovered at this same moment of transition in cinema, when both synchronised sound and colour arrived, but they belonged to the bygone world of the *belle époque*, before the slaughter of the Western Front; their appeal, both to the Surrealists and to the poetic realists of French cinema in the 1930s, was at least partly nostalgic. This was film before narrative and melodrama intervened — another version of the 'primitive' medium that Virginia Woolf celebrated in her 1926 essay on cinema — and in Méliès's case, it revelled in a new-found capacity to extend the repertoire of the stage magician, which was what he was before starting to make films.

The young Méliès had in fact acquired his love of magic while living in London in 1884, supposedly gaining useful experience for his family's bootmaking business, but actually spending much of his time at "England's home of mystery", the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly. Back in Paris, he discovered that the theatre formerly run by the great magician Jean Etienne Robert-Houdin was available to buy, and in 1888 he became its proud proprietor and star – with one of his great stage illusions, a lady apparently reclining unsupported in mid-air (possibly based on Robert-Houdin's 'Ethereal Suspension' illusion), brilliantly demonstrated in Hugo. What Scorsese doesn't show (although I believe he hoped to) was that when Méliès first saw the Lumière Cinematographe – not at a fairground, as shown in Hugo, but at its premiere demonstration in central Paris - he promptly headed back to London to buy a projector from the English pioneer Robert Paul, which became the basis of his own first camera.

Arguably Scorsese is merely following Selznick's simplified account, even though the omission of both Edison and Paul will irritate some, as will the invention of a pioneer film historian 'René Tabard' as deus ex machina (the name belongs to Jean Vigo's alter ego in his autobiographical 1933 film *Zéro de conduite*, which may be a deliberate reference). But on the positive side, Hugo does restore an important dimension to understanding the original fascination of film. One of Selznick's inspirations was a book about the history of automata, lifelike machines that mimic some aspect of human behaviour; and the "invention" of the novel's title is such an automaton, which forges a link between its juvenile hero and the embittered older man. Magicians had long practised mechanical invention as an essential part of their craft, and a number of the first presenters of 'animated photographs' were magicians: Carl Hertz took Paul's first projector round the world, while another popular conjuror, David Devant, showed it at the Egyptian Hall, whose proprietor Nevil Maskelyne was also an early investor in Paul's business.

The larger point is that film 'brought to life' the scenes it showed, and in doing so – as Noël Burch observed in his book *Life to Those Shadows* – helped assuage a 'Frankenstein complex' that was widespread throughout the 19th century. Whether we see this in Marxist terms, as satisfying a drive to mechanise reproduction, or as the expression of a yearning for immortality (and perhaps challenging what Freud would later call the "death





FOR MY NEXT TRICK 'A Trip to the Moon', top, and other original films of Georges Méliès, on left in main pic, are paid tribute to in 'Hugo'

drive"), there seems to have been some deep connection between the attempt to create ever more lifelike automata and 'living pictures'. Even Thomas Edison, the hard-headed industrialist of invention, took a gamble in 1890 on manufacturing talking dolls, which incorporated miniature versions of his signature creation, the phonograph.

Parisian folklore

Magic, mechanism, Méliès – but what about the eponymous Hugo and the vast architecture of the Gare Montparnasse, which frames the action of Scorsese's film? In Selznick's graphic novel, the young orphan lives in the clocktower of the station, having been taken there by his uncle, whose job was to maintain its many clocks. Much of the book's power stems from Selznick's evocations of its public spaces and the hidden labyrinths that lie behind these – densely cross-hatched in a style that translates the Piranesi of the *Imaginary Prisons* prints into a grainy comic-book idiom.

Dante Ferretti, Scorsese's regular production designer, has seized the opportunity to create what is an almost entirely invented world—necessarily, since the original 1840 Gare Montparnasse was replaced by a modern station in the 1960s. Enormous sets built at Shepperton and Pinewood have been enhanced in CGI to provide a setting which can accommodate both the sharp-edged action of the public areas and the more dreamlike romance of Hugo's lonely backstage domain, linked by sections that recall the original illustrations of Jules Verne's novels (name-checked in the film) and indeed a whole history of the inner workings of cinematic clocks.

In terms of Parisian folklore, Hugo takes its place



The Coming of a New Art: A Still from an Early Moving Picture
George Melies as a magician in one of his earliest films. He was the first man to build a film studio
and make long pictures. He began to show "living pictures" in his theatre in Paris in January, 1896,
only a month after Lumière had held the first motion-picture show in the Grand Café.

A cinema magician, he was the patron saint of all filmmakers aspiring to create a self-sufficient fantasy world

in a succession of works built around the land-mark buildings that are their setting, of which the most famous is probably Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. More immediately, it can be read as a juvenile counterpart to Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*, with Hugo preying on Méliès's toy stall as the equivalent of Erik abducting Christine from the stage of the Opéra Garnier to keep her in his lair in the cellars. Here, however, Hugo's invitation to his young female friend Isabelle to visit his secret domain has a touching innocence

Opinions will vary as to how successfully Scorsese and screenwriter John Logan have translated Hugo and Isabelle into live-action characters, played by Asa Butterfield and Chloë Grace Moretz. I suspect they will work better for younger viewers than they do for critics, but it can also be argued that – for all Butterfield's emotional intensity – to some extent they are ciphers connecting the larger-than-life characters of the Station Inspector played with sadistic glee by Sacha Baron Cohen, Kingsley's Méliès, or Christopher Lee's wise bookshop owner Monsieur Labisse, whose character links the book and film's literary backstories.

The film's boldest stroke is to create all this in 3D – and not only in a tasteful 'period' style, but making full use of the variable depth illusion that digital stereoscopy offers. There are moments that recall the much-derided stereo 'effects' of 3D in the 1950s, as faces and objects loom out of the screen towards us, to comic or spectacular effect – notably in the historic event of the 1895 crash, when a train smashed through the Montparnasse buffers and on through the station wall. But there are also subtler effects as Scorsese and Ferretti, working

closely with DP Robert Richardson and editor Thelma Schoonmaker – all enthusiastic 3D novices – explore the spatial potential of what amounts to a new dimension in cinema. I wrote recently (S&S, November) about the danger that inferior simulated stereoscopy will kill interest in the vast potential for digital 3D image-making; and I believe that the very different strategies that Scorsese's Hugo and Spielberg's The Adventures of Tintin have adopted do make a strong case for continued development of this medium, even if they encounter the same scepticism that once greeted synch sound and colour in the 1930s.

Stereoscopy has allowed Scorsese to bring the world of Méliès's studio alive more vividly than could otherwise have been achieved, taking us from the physicality and mechanism of those films' making into the modern world of multimedia image-consumption - and using rotoscoped 3D simulation (devised by visual effects wizard Rob Legato) to create the kind of impact that Melies's films had for early spectators. Enhancing these films, once dismissed as 'primitive', allows a wider audience to see them afresh, benefiting from the novelty of 3D and from what digital techniques have brought to film restoration. (Yet another example of Scorsese's restoration mission, Powell and Pressburger's The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp, screened recently in New York, and arrives in the UK in May.) But quite deliberately, Hugo also pays an elegiac tribute to the vanishing world of the film strip with a close-up demonstration of what a celluloid splice actually is - something that deserves the respect of all cinephiles.

TILLS POSTERS AND DESIG

As a BFI season celebrates the MGM musical, **Richard Dyer** finds lurking shadows in one of its most glorious Technicolor incarnations, 'Meet Me in St. Louis', while overleaf **Kay Dickinson** revisits a less typical—and very British— MGM product, 'The Boy Friend'

PEACH PERFECT

eet Me in St. Louis has often been considered the perfect musical. "Immaculate in its perfection," said Gerald Kaufman in his 1994 BFI Classic; "a ginger peachy wrote Crowther at the time of its release, borrowing a phrase from the film. It blends the fractious elements of the musical - narrative and spectacle, dialogue and song-into a seamless whole that embodies the harmony of the Smith family whose life it depicts. And yet it has also been seen as a film of repression and unhappiness - a critique of the family ideal beneath an overt celebration of it. I have myself had the experience on one occasion of finding what I'd always thought of as the most blissful of films to be the most bleak and miserable too. Can it be both so perfect and so contradictory?

Perfection in a musical has often been held to reside in integration: the numbers should seem to arise naturally out of the situations and further the story. Meet Me in St. Louis stands at the apogee of this ideal. This is evident in its opening number, featuring the title song, which had originally been written for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. Lon (Henry Daniels Jr) – the only boy among the five Smith children – la-las it as he comes into the family home; third daughter Agnes (Joan Carroll) bawls it as she squelches through the house, wet from swimming; Grandpa (Harry Davenport) picks it up, forgetting the words at one point; and finally second daughter Esther (Judy Garland) and a group of friends join in as they drop her off at the house. The song is integrated partly because it's an actual hit from the period that is on everyone's lips, sung as they go about their business. It also expresses the literal and metaphorical harmony of the Smith household, with one generation passing it to another and then out to the surrounding community.

Two other songs, both at the party, are actual songs of the period: 'Skip to My Lou' and 'Under the Bamboo Tree'. Another two seem like it, but are in fact perfect imitations: 'Over the Banister', which boy-next-door John Truett (Tom Drake) gets Esther to sing when they are alone after the party, and 'You and I', which Mr and Mrs Smith (Leon Ames and Mary Astor) sing to bring the family back together after Mr Smith's devastating announcement that they are going to move to New York. Almost all the songs are also kinds of real-life



ONE SINGS, THE OTHER DOESN'T While Esther (Judy Garland) sings her heart out in 'The Trolley Song' and other numbers, husbandto-be John Truett (Tom Drake) never joins in

music-making. 'Meet Me in St. Louis' is the song everyone is singing, 'Skip to My Lou' and 'Under the Bamboo Tree' home-made party music. 'Over the Banister' is a serenade, 'The Trolley Song' a collective singalong, 'You and I' a parlour ballad. 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' is a lullaby, sung to the accompaniment of a music box by Esther to little sister Tootie (Margaret O'Brien).

The numbers also have function in the story. 'The Boy Next Door', 'Over the Banister' and 'The Trolley Song' mark stages in the development of the relationship between Esther and John. 'Meet Me in St. Louis' binds members of the family together. 'You and I' succeeds in repairing the damage of the news of the move to New York. Everything seems to flow naturally, aided by consummate editing and camera movement. Yet the film is also subtly pitched at a level of artifice and theatricality just above Hollywood's standardissue realism, so that it can embrace the energy and spectacle of the musical.

The production was prepared with considerable concern for period accuracy. Based on author Sally Benson's reminiscences of her childhood, the sets and costumes were thoroughly researched. Too much so: the film piles on the detail, eggs up the colour. It is painstakingly careful about period

accuracy and yet never wholly concerned to create the illusion that this is how it was.

The film is also frequently tinged with a sense of theatre. 'The Boy Next Door' ends with Esther allowing a lace curtain to close across her face. The Smith front room readily produces proscenium arches for Esther's entrance into 'Skip to My Lou', complete with a little fanfare, as well as for her and Tootie's 'Under the Bamboo Tree'. For 'Over the Banister', Esther consciously sets up the lighting, having John accompany her round the house turning the lamps low, ending with those on the landing, from which she looks down at John in perfect Romeo and Juliet balcony-scene set-up.

Each section of the film (for the four seasons) begins with a framed sepia photograph of the Smith house that turns into colour and movement. This is paradoxical. Colour and movement all affirm greater realism, since these things characterise reality. On the other hand, Technicolor (especially here, in the hands of Minnelli and cinematographer George Folsey) is colour heightened beyond realism, and the camera movement works in choreographic coordination with onscreen movement and music. In becoming more real, the film also becomes less real.

Heights of bliss

Meet Me in St. Louis is perfectly pitched: naturalistic enough to allow the songs to be integrated and plausible, and at the same time theatrical enough



MGM Musicals Meet Me in St. Louis

to take the film to those heights of bliss that the musical promises – all to underline its feelgood evocation of family togetherness.

Yet Meet Me in St. Louis can be considered less than perfect. Mr and Mrs Smith, and Katie the maid (Marjorie Main), are not part of the opening invitation to 'Meet Me in St. Louis' and Mr Smith, returning home hot and tired from work, tells Esther and eldest sister Rose (Lucille Bremer) to stop "screeching" it. Esther's husband-to-be John doesn't sing either. He gets Esther to sing 'Over the Banister' on his behalf, doesn't join in the chorus of 'The Trolley Song' and only has one last-minute dance with Esther at the Christmas Ball. John is excluded from the musicality that constitutes the film's sense of togetherness. Family tensions in the Smith family are resolved by mutual parental music-making ('You and I'); no such possibility seems to be in store for the future John Truett family. So much of Esther's energy goes into securing a future that looks set to exclude the elating musicality that she pours into both family and seduction; the prospect before her is one drained of warmth and vividness.

It is the sense of the family as a source of repression of energies - especially female and sexual ones - that informs two of the most sustained discussions of the film, by Robin Wood (in Personal Views) and, most extensively, Andrew Britton (in a 1978 article in the Australian Journal of Screen Theory, reprinted in Joe McElhaney's excellent anthology on Vincente Minnelli). The songs suggest libido, often anarchic or perverse. All bar 'Skip to My Lou' are initiated by women. Esther dances in front of her own reflection in 'The Boy Next Door' and sings a song in admiration of herself ('Over the Banister'). In 'The Trolley Song', once she has seen that John has managed to catch the trolley, she turns her back on him to sing to the women around her; at the end, on the line "with his hand holding mine", she takes one of the women's hands and holds it between hers, a moment of lesbo-auto-queer jouissance.

It's little sister Tootie, however, who is the fullest expression of energy and perversity. She rejects the cutesy songs proposed for her by Esther at the party in favour of 'I Was Drunk Last Night Dear Mother'. Her duet with Esther, 'Under the Bamboo Tree', is for a male voice, and she and Esther perform a singularly strutting dance to round it off. Her biggest number, however, is not a song at all but the Halloween sequence, in which she 'kills' one of the most feared neighbours, Mr Braukoff an astonishing bravura sequence in terms of cinematic style and the intense performance of sevenyear-old Margaret O'Brien. MGM producer Arthur Freed wanted to cut the Halloween sequence, perhaps sensing that it was too much for the feelgood tone of the film. Minnelli prevailed on him to keep it in.

Tootie's energy is extremely disruptive. When the family are reeling from Mr Smith's announcement of the move to New York and politely but pointedly refusing the slices of cakes he offers them, she suddenly announces: "I'm starting a tunnel tomorrow from our garden right under the streetcar tracks and into Mrs Middleton's terrace, then while she's walking around some day I'll grab her by the leg." She puts a Halloween guy on the





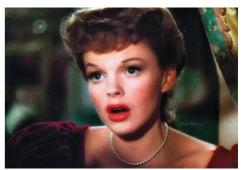
COLD COMFORT
When Esther (Judy Garland) sings 'Have Yourself
a Merry Little Christmas' to little sister Tootie
(Margaret O'Brien, above), there is a sense of loss

trolley tracks, risking derailing it, and destroys the snow people she and her siblings have made. It is the game with the trolley that is most appalling, because she might have killed or maimed a large number of people and — perhaps even more weighty in the context of a musical — because she puts John and Esther's relationship in jeopardy (and the trolley is of course highly significant in the development of their relationship).

Tootie's outbursts bespeak a rage against what awaits and is expected of her as she grows up. The trolley that she threatens is the locus of courtship, of getting your subordination, and the snow people are her elder siblings and their ridiculous obsessions. The extended intensity of the Halloween sequence, the danger of the assault on the trolley, the inchoate explosion of the destruction of the snow people – can the film recover from these disruptions? For much of the film the family ignore Tootie's violence or laugh it off. But can we?

The severest test is the assault on the snow people. It is an all-stops-out melodramatic climax, followed by a quick climbdown by Mr Smith and then the lacklustre final sequence at the World's Fair, all the duller for having been so anticipated throughout the film. Before this, Esther sings 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas' to Tootie to comfort her against the thought of leaving behind her snow people — and everything they both love about St Louis. 'Merry Little Christmas' is a decid-

'She has just been proposed to, yet the song suggests a feeling of having to lose everything'





edly low-key song of cheer and Garland's singing underlines its melancholy. Soon after the number begins, she stops looking at Tootie and seems to gaze into the sadness of her future. She has just been proposed to — everything she has worked for throughout the film — yet the song suggests a feeling of having now to lose everything worth living for. No wonder Tootie is not comforted. Her distress is shown with astonishing intensity, in a cutaway to her body distorted in the frame, trembling, a tear coming from her eye, looking as lost in sadness as Esther by the end. It is the song — the musicality that is the stuff of harmony and elation — that precipitates her screaming outburst.

Meet Me in St. Louis persists most commonly in the memory as lovely, joyous and warming. Google the title and it's very hard to find many comments that are not variations on these terms. Nor is it the case that the ending of the film must seem like a let-down. The fair is a big public and cosmopolitan event, but the point of the film is to affirm the spirit of such things "right here where we live". By remaining small-scale and focused on the family, the film brings the fair home rather than risking home being lost at the fair. And Irene Sharaff's costumes for the Smith women in this sequence are the most scrumptious in the film.

How much the keenness of Garland's singing and O'Brien's howling stays in the mind – how much the emotions they set in train seem salved and dissolved by the last few minutes of the film – must remain a matter of judgement, inclination and occasion. Yet it may be that the perfection of *Meet Me in St. Louis* is that it allows the keenness to persist as a poignant counterpoint to the bright affirmation of the finale. Formal perfection does not have to mean tonal homogeneity – just as ideological attitude does not have to be unqualified. *Meet Me in St. Louis* is ginger (tangy) and peachy (sweet), perfect.

■ 'Meet Me in St. Louis' is rereleased on 16 December

A VERY BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT

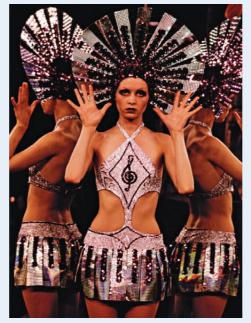
The classic MGM musical was given a uniquely British twist by Ken Russell in 'The Boy Friend', says **Kay Dickinson**

Surprisingly, the year 1971 saw MGM turn its highest profit in 25 years. While a slew of gunpacking westerns and action movies had certainly stormed the production schedules, it was the studio's rekindled and renegotiated relationship with music that brought in much of this money, via such diverse films as the Frederick Ashtonchoreographed ballet *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*, the Joe Cocker rockumentary Mad Dogs and Englishmen and, most importantly, the Isaac Hayesscored blaxploitation classic Shaft. Less swayed by that year's impulse to innovate, The Boy Friend instead tipped a high-sheen hat back towards the history of the musical. In the hands of director Ken Russell, Sandy Wilson's 1953 stage smash (itself a pastiche of the 1920s) swelled to accommodate 1930s homage and a couple of MGM catalogue numbers. And lest we skip a decade, it gave its leading role to top 1960s model Twiggy.

The film owes its existence to a serendipitous accident that would not seem out of place in its own plot. As Russell himself tells it, an ear-wigging tabloid hack misreported a chat about the stage musical between the director and Twiggy as a done deal for its cinematic adaptation. MGM had actually owned the property since 1956, but had left it to gather dust, unsure of how something so modest might wear the trademark MGM plush. Nearly 15 years later, this journalistic error allowed the studio to seize a deferred opportunity to make good on their investment.

MGM invited Russell to pitch his take for a film adaptation. The original storyline, he contended, could be encased within a backstage plot – a play within a screenplay. Glenda Jackson would follow in the crutch prints of 42nd Street's Bebe Daniels as an ageing and unexpectedly incapacitated star. Twiggy would take the Ruby Keeler part of the ingénue understudy, ill-prepared but triumphing by curtain fall. So far, so Warner Brothers - and thus paradoxically, one of MGM's last true musicals ended up a paean to a rival studio. True to that 1930s model, in The Boy Friend the proscenium arch quickly gives way to kaleidoscopic utopia of the Busby Berkeley variety. Chorines dance on modernist gramophones in 'I Could Be Happy with You', the camera swooping overhead and through their legs. 'It's Never Too Late to Fall in Love' presents witty aerial shots of bath-chair choreography.

Yet when *The Boy Friend* flaunts such ingenious disrespect for the restrictive laws of space, it does so courtesy of an American passport. Each of its spectacular song-and-dance sequences is legitimised as a reverie of one Mr De Thrill (Vladek Sheybal), a Hollywood director who has dropped in on the show. Much to the disdain of its fans, Sandy Wilson's British-born original is down-



CROSS FERTILISATION
MGM's vehicle for Twiggy, above, became a tribute
to the 1930s musicals of rival studio Warners

graded to fodder despoiled by a ramshackle troupe of hams housed in a near-deserted British seaside theatre. Save for our heroine, each tries to outdo the other in a desperate, deluded attempt to win a dream-factory contract.

Here the movie is truer to life than it might first appear. *The Boy Friend* is not exactly pure MGM; it was in fact the first release of a joint venture with UK-based EMI, a music giant as new to film production as Twiggy's character Polly — and, judging by its withdrawal from the sector a few years later, less gifted. The beleaguered theatre company acts as a stand-in for the UK film



industry, frantically trying to keep from going under, their rescue only possible via all the tricks of American Great Depression cinema.

As EMI laboured to make musicals as lucratively as it did music, MGM was benefiting from a bit of offshoring. If 1970s Britain was losing its competitive manufacturing edge by the day, it could still churn out a cheap, reliable Englishlanguage movie for a mere \$2 million. Similar US vehicles of the time ran up bills in excess of \$20 million. Russell's own 'let's put on a show' chutzpah certainly helped matters, encouraging high-calibre stalwarts from his earlier work such as Glenda Jackson, Max Adrian and Georgina Hale to appear for a fraction of their usual fees. Conversely, just like the character she plays, Twiggy and co-juvenile Christopher Gable (a former Royal Ballet star) were swimming out of their professional depths - and were cheap at the price as a result.

Thankfully, the storyline can neatly excuse Twiggy's amateurish acting, her singing (as delicately frail as her looks) and her dancing (no worse than Ruby Keeler's ever was). All in, the film makes many a virtue of its low budget. In its bacchanal fantasia sequence, satyr costumes that seem bought second-hand from pantomime horses gently rib the intellectual overreaching of the famous extended ballets in MGM's *An American in Paris* (1951) and *Sinqin' in the Rain* (1952).

Ultimately, then, *The Boy Friend* persists with a kind-hearted spoofing of Johnny Foreigner that makes it a very British picture. The country's lengthy internal debates over the merits of the European Economic Community in the 1970s echo through the French finishing-school setting of the on-stage narrative. Riviera refinement becomes ammunition within the movie's class war in miniature, with Bryan Pringle's snobbishly haughty diction and Max Adrian's Noel Coward-liness losing the battle to the dropped aitches of Twiggy, Murray Melvin and Barbara Windsor.

In the end, Polly rejects De Thrill's Hollywood offer in favour of 'A Room in Bloomsbury', perhaps the film's most recognisable number. Instead, De Thrill returns to California to make *Singin' in the Rain*—a rare MGM reference to an altogether more enduring pastiche of the 1920s. But Russell's loyalty to music and national culture lingered on, one rainy-day seaside distraction giving way to another—the pinball wizardry of one of his next (and decidedly more pioneering) projects: his 1975 film adaptation of The Who's rock opera *Tommy*.

■ 'The Boy Friend' plays as part of the MGM musicals season at BFI Southbank, London on 9 & 29 December. The earlier screening will be introduced by Ken Russell and Barbara Windsor

The case of a Londoner who lay dead and undiscovered in her flat inspired documentarist Carol Morley to explore the mystery in 'Dreams of a Life'. She talks to **Nick Bradshaw**

FORGET ME NOT

ost films that rake detective-style over a late life — *Citizen Kane* being the acme — aim to tease out a character who made a difference to the world. *Dreams of a Life* starts, sadly, with the seeming opposite: the riddle of Joyce Carol Vincent, a woman who died alone in her flat in Wood Green, North London, at the end of 2003, her remains only discovered nearly three years later — surrounded by half-wrapped Christmas presents, the television still on, bills stacked up behind the front door and, inevitably, a terrible smell in the air.

Who was this woman, so unnoticeable? The newspapers detailed little, so filmmaker Carol Morley began her own investigations, placing adverts in an attempt to find people who knew Joyce. The mystery deepened: Joyce had been a beautiful, glamorous, sociable woman who had passed through many lives, if perhaps always with a secret heart. *Dreams of a Life* juggles the interviewees' testimony with eerie, voiceless reimaginings of Joyce's early and later life (Zawe Ashton and Alix Luka-Cain embodying the adult and young Joyce), Barry Adamson's score adding to the *film noir* mystique. It's an unnerving but moving act of tribute and reclamation.

Nick Bradshaw: Making this documentary, you've played private investigator, interviewer, drama director...

Carol Morley: Some films hire researchers, don't they? But I knew I wanted to do the detective work myself. It felt important that I should find a piece of paper with information on it, rather than have someone tell me about that piece of paper. And I wanted to bring that texture of discovery to the film, somehow. Some people might ask why I didn't just put myself on camera, but I wanted to impose my meaning through filmmaking. You do what film does, which is to reconstruct, to rebuild

things rather than just following someone around. For me documentary is a brilliant place to examine material, not just to show it happening — that's reportage, it's different.

NB: There's a strong 'there but for the grace of God go I' frisson to Joyce's story.

CM: I found so many things that connected us. She was the same age as me; at one point I found out we'd lived on the same street – at different times, but the same road; we'd both wanted to be singers. And there was the connection of not having done the 'normal' things: people say if she'd had kids, it wouldn't have happened...

But I didn't want to create a victim—I wanted to create someone that most of us could know, or have known, or will know. She hadn't seemed to isolate herself: she had good jobs in the City, she went out, she lit up a room, she was very social. She was somebody who wanted to be part of the world. I think the irony of the story is that all the people in the film thought that Joyce was off having a better life than they were. They just assumed that because she was so beautiful and so vivacious, she'd gone off to America or wherever and was living it up.

NB: 'Dreams of a Life' is a striking portrait of a city, too – its social strata, the way people move through it, and away from each other.

CM: I moved from Manchester to London, and really understand that feeling of arriving in London when you're not from London. Joyce answered an ad for a flat in *Loot*, and I went to the British Library and found the original advert. It was so important to me to get the texture right, because the detail helps you feel it. Everything around the ad—the price, the phone numbers—tells you about the time

Joyce was actually born in London, but I think there was a restless quality to her, so she kept moving about. I really wanted to get the A-Z map in it as well, because it's such a profound part of

London, so the backdrop to the interviews is a blow-up of that. I think it ties in to London, but also to the city and to wandering. Trying to find your path in life, to put it cornily...

It took me five years overall to make the film, but three or four years to find the people. Because people were hard to find—sometimes I'd only have a first name, and although in the film it looks like I found groups of people, none of them were necessarily speaking. I reunited some people by finding them. Everyone had gone their separate ways.

NB: Did you find out more about her family that's not in the film?

CM: Joyce has four sisters, and I'm in contact with one. I did find out a lot more, about them and other people, and stuff that I would have loved to have put in. But there was an issue of consent. I didn't want to pursue people, make them uncomfortable and include things that they didn't want. I'm not a journalist, I'm a filmmaker, and I felt I needed to honour the family, who've been through a lot and wanted to remain anonymous. I think they were quite suspicious of the media, and felt they would be seen as not caring about Joyce, when it was a much more complex story. But I also felt that Joyce didn't belong to them. We're not owned by our family, and I think as adults we make choices. Our family aren't our choices, but our friends are.

NB: Once you'd got people on camera, did you still feel you were playing investigator, or did you just make space for them to open up?

CM: It wasn't the kind of film that people wanted to be in, right? It wasn't like, "Great, I can be in a film talking about Marc Bolan..." It was a film they knew could make them look quite bad. So I felt I needed to build up relationships with them, so they knew I wouldn't just do something exploitative of Joyce or of them. So I got to know most of the people in it — or at least their stories. I met Martin [Lister, Joyce's ex-boyfriend] three or four times over a couple of years.







'Film noir is about the puzzle of the woman at the heart of the story. I wanted to think about Joyce in those terms'

LAYERS OF REALITY Filmmaker Carol Morley, below, interweaves reenactments featuring Zawe Ashton, above, as Joyce, with interviews with those who knew the real woman, including ex-boyfriend Martin, left



At the point of doing the interviews, I wanted to get [the interviewees'] best selves across – to show their characters as strongly as possible – so I wanted them to feel comfortable with me and the situation. So I had the camera in a very dark area of the room, and they couldn't see much but me. It was very intimate. And I always really listened to them, and asked the same questions a lot. It became like therapy, I suppose, in both directions...

NB: Is the flat you use in the film the actual one Joyce lived in?

CM: It could be.

NB: It's located right in the heart of the Wood Green shopping centre, which became one of the hubs of last summer's urban riots.

CM: The estate Joyce died in is called Sky City, and it's above this massively busy shopping centre. It's no longer called Shopping City, but they've never taken down that sign. The centre was built at the end of 1979, so it was part of Thatcher's Britain, and Joyce died across from HMV, Argos and all the high-street chains. Two hundred and fifty thousand people go to that shopping centre every week, and they all walk by Joyce's flat, while she was forgotten in an age supposedly of communication. Strange.

I'd made the film and then all the riots began—there was looting and rioting right where Joyce lived. I felt a profound connection to that, because it links right back to the 8os, where Joyce came from. She was aspirational in the 8os—some people said she probably voted Conservative. So I did feel when the riots happened [that] there was something important in this story about someone being so forgotten.

NB: She's a bit of a film noir heroine, too.

CM: Lying dead for three years at 38: really, you have

to be an enigma for that to happen to you, and for me *film noir* is always about the puzzle of the woman at the heart of the story. I really wanted to think about Joyce in those terms, as a mystery that we might never solve—one worth looking at and pursuing, even though she had been so forgotten. In our reconstructions or reimaginings, she's always dressed in blue, which is a *film noir* reference, but also gives her a ghostlike quality.

NB: The recording you found of Joyce singing is partic-

ularly ghostly.

CM: It was incredibly powerful. Nowadays everybody has their mobile phones, their video cameras, their video cameras on their mobile phones — everybody's taking images all the time. Yet it was really, really difficult to find images of Joyce. It made me realise how powerful and important the moving image is — but also how it kind of becomes less meaningful when we get such a proliferation of it. But I think it was precisely because it was so rare that it became so important to find her voice. And she's actually saying her name, so it's this strange affirmation of who she is.

That tape took two years to find, and when I eventually got hold of it, it was on a quarter-inch tape which was so old it had to be baked for a week in some specialist oven. I was desperate to hear it, and even then didn't know if she was on it or not. And I finally got to hear it at the place that baked the tape, with some guy who really didn't care what it was, and it was so haunting. It was the first time I'd ever heard her — it was amazing.

• 'Dreams of a Life' is released on 16 December, and is reviewed on page 64. A video interview with Carol Morley discussing the film's techniques will be published at bfi.org.uk/sightandsound the same week



Documentarist Molly Dineen has turned her democratic camera on everyone from farm labourers and zookeepers to prime ministers and Spice Girls. She talks to **Poppy Simpson**

A NOSE FOR THE GREY AREAS

n 1997 Molly Dineen was desperate to spend some quality time with Tony Blair. She had been hired to film an intimate portrait of New Labour's leader for a party election broadcast (mysteriously codenamed 'Project K9'), yet she was struggling to get anything but the now-familiar pieces to camera in which an earnest Blair rehearsed his key messages - "leadership not drift", "many not the few". As a documentary filmmaker, Dineen was impatient to get beyond the dogmatic political speak – to strip Blair of his packaging and reveal what she felt was his more natural and attractive persona. But as a director for hire, for the first and only time in her career, she was constrained by the expectations of Blair and his team, who took a while to understand - let alone accept - her immersive approach to filmmaking.

Dineen found an unlikely ally in Alastair Campbell, who realised that the impression of documentary *vérité* would lend an air of integrity to this piece of political propaganda. However, as Camp-

bell noted in his diaries, Blair "could not get his head around the Molly film. I said we wanted something more natural than he had done before, and that meant relaxing and letting them get more and more material... He wasn't happy with that approach. It was as if he wanted the thing scripted... whereas I wanted something that emerged naturally and got a side of him that people don't normally see."

Dineen has made her name drawing out the "sides that people don't normally see", whether it's the poignant vulnerability of a couple of colonial relics (in 1987's *Home from the Hill* and 1988's *My African Farm*) or the desperate loneliness of stardom (*Geri*, 1999). She has a knack for charming even the most reluctant subjects and presenting superficially unattractive characters in a new and empathetic light.

But politics was unfamiliar territory for Dineen, and Blair proved her toughest challenge yet. For the final Party Election Broadcast – a ten-minute film broadcast under the peculiar title *Blair: The*

Movie — Dineen drew on only a fraction of the material she had accumulated; it was only in two sequences — one shot in a single afternoon in the Blair's family kitchen — that she felt the future prime minister appeared genuinely relaxed and confident. Nonetheless, the film was a success: Philip Gould, writing in *The Unfinished Revolution*, felt it was the Labour Party's "most effective broadcast", with its glitz-free approach helping to break through the scepticism of the electorate. The critics weren't so sure, with many assuming Dineen was one of 'Tony's cronies'. Mark Lawson, one the director's biggest fans, predicted that "when the books are written about Dineen's career, this piece will seem a curious footnote".

Today, Dineen agrees with this assessment – and is clearly ambivalent about her decision to make the election broadcast. But if it's the obvious anomaly in her filmography, it remains an important marker in her career. Until 1997, she had described herself as 'apolitical'. Although her films grappled with big issues and universal themes, her



primary interest lay in discovering the essence of the men and women in front of her camera – who more often than not were unused to the limelight. But Dineen's insight into the process of political kingmaking provoked a shift in focus. As her first experience of filming a public figure, it made her interested in how her style of filmmaking could be developed to explore the issue of celebrity (hence her subsequent film about a Spice Girl); but it also – in her own words – "politicised" her, fuelling the passionate curiosity that seems to drive all her work, and fixing her gaze more firmly on the public sphere.

Observation and engagement

Molly Dineen first made an impression on the documentary scene with her National Film and Television School graduating film *Home from the Hill*, which was snapped up by BBC2 and edited down from an hour for the channel's *40 Minutes* strand. The documentary, which follows retired colonel Hilary Hook as he returns from Kenya to

an unfamiliar England after a lifetime abroad, was an enormous success—it made a minor celebrity of its protagonist and was broadcast in over 26 countries. Audiences were charmed by Dineen's ability to weave such a warm, witty and touching portrait of a man so totally out of synch with modern life. She was also praised for her (then) unusual documentary approach—a combination of observation and direct engagement with her subjects.

This style, to which she has remained broadly loyal throughout her career, was very much forged during the making of the film. At the NFTS, Dineen had been taught by Head of Documentary Herb Di Gioia, a passionate advocate of *cinéma vérité*. "There was no other way of telling a story and making a documentary, as far as he was concerned," Dineen recalls. "He cited the Maysles brothers, Leacock, Pennebaker and Wiseman.

THE TWO NATIONS

Molly Dineen, above, shooting 'The Lie of the Land' and, opposite right, making 'Blair: The Movie' with Tony Blair and sound recordist Sarah Jeans, left We analysed every single inch of their films."

But when Dineen began filming Hilary Hook using the observational method in which she'd been schooled, she soon encountered problems. "It was a fiasco, because I didn't know what I was doing," she confesses. "You can tell from some scenes in the film. The whole idea of handholding [the camera] and moving round after somebody, not getting in their way, not permanently having their back facing the lens - all of that was just a monumental challenge. Plus, Hook was floundering round supermarkets trying to work out how to live in England, and we Dineen and sound recordist Sarah Jeans] had become almost his house servants. It evolved into much more of a participatory style, not observational at all." Dineen has always rejected any attempt to classify her documentaries as 'fly on the wall', arguing that they are anything but. As she insists: "I'm eyeing my subjects through a huge movie camera, they're talking to the lens as I'm filming them and the process is very visible."

Molly Dineen



♣ Although the re-editing of *Home from the Hill* by the BBC had been a difficult and at times acrimonious process, the film secured Dineen her first formal commission. She went on to make two further films for 40 *Minutes* – the BBC strand that, under the stewardship of Edward Mirzoeff, produced over 20 films each year by directors old (Paul Watson, Jonathan Gili) and new (the young Adam Curtis and Stephen Lambert).

Dineen recognises that 40 Minutes was a vital platform for her early work: "The audience knew that they were tuning in to see good documentaries, whatever the subject or style, and as filmmakers you knew that you didn't have to explain yourself in the first 30 seconds - you could let your film breathe and there was room for experimentation." And experiment she did, most boldly in the elegiac Heart of the Angel (1989), her first ensemble piece, which captures the daily and nightly lives of workers at London's Angel tube station, struggling in the face of Dickensian conditions. For Mirzoeff, a long-time mentor who has executive-produced many of Dineen's subsequent films, *Heart of the Angel* represented a step forward: "The structure is tighter, with more content packed in," Mirzoeff writes in the booklet for the BFI DVD release. "Above all it reveals Molly Dineen's rare ability to empathise with, and draw out, people of all ages and every social class. They like her, and they are prepared to be as natural and sincere to her camera as she is to them."

Dineen has a reputation for falling in love with the characters she follows, and she is fiercely protective of them in the editing suite. It has been suggested that this loyalty can undermine her more journalistic instincts, but she is very clear on her responsibility as a filmmaker. "I think that once you've entered into an agreement with somebody and they're going to allow you to film them, you really owe it to them to try and be faithful to their boundaries," she says. As this suggests, she seems far more interested in consensus than division, in patiently highlighting those things that unite us - what she refers to as "the grey area". "If I come across something quite extreme, I always think twice about whether to put it in, because I want to make films that are more about the human condition," she explains. "If you've got something very black-and-white in the centre of your story, then you're definitely getting away from being able to have the greyness."

Her 1993 series *The Ark* is a case in point. The story at the heart of this four-part Bafta-winner was the danger of the closure of London Zoo and its subsequent human and animal redundancies. It



PERSONAL VISION Molly Dineen first made her name with 'Home from the Hill', left, and its follow-up 'My African Farm', centre, before winning a Bafta with 'The Ark', right

was front-page news at the time. But while the crisis at the zoo provided the narrative structure of the series, the films – like all the best documentaries – are about so much more.

As Dineen recalls, "There were things that I discovered were going on in the Zoological Council that, if included, would have definitely changed the sort of film it was – would have made it much more journalistic, more hard-hitting. But [then] I couldn't have got away with people going on about redundancy or being useful or useless in life – the bigger issues that I love to deal with, because it's relevant to all."

State of the nation

At the time of its first broadcast, *The Ark* was widely recognised as a metaphor for an ailing nation: a Britain where the post-war consensus had evaporated, leaving in its place an increasingly divided population in which social problems that once seemed manageable now seemed intractable. Watch it today – not least in the context of the current cuts – and *The Ark* has lost none of its allegorical power. What's noticeable, however, is the difference in pace and texture of the series when compared to documentary television today.

Dineen is reluctant to criticise contemporary TV too strongly, but she does lament what she sees as our declining faith in audiences: "People are encouraged to go for sensation and conflict, because it's a much more dramatic way to impact on the schedules, and everybody's fighting for viewing figures. I just think that it's disrespecting the audience. I think the audiences are capable of having real lives shown to them without all the trousers dropped or the people humiliated or the exposés. I really think that documentary is fantastically interesting for people, because we're all fundamentally interested in nosing around in each other's lives, are we not?"

Dineen's brand of nosiness doesn't come cheap, however. She's notorious for the amount of time

'People are encouraged to go for sensation and conflict. I just think that it's disrespecting the audience'



she spends both shooting and editing her films. And she's well aware that, with the proliferation of channels and the tightening of budgets, her species of documentary is under threat, even if she herself is not. (Her lack of output since 2007 is more to do with the fact that she has three children; she is now toying with the idea of a film on education.) Along with Nick Broomfield, Kim Longinotto, Adam Curtis and precious few others, Dineen is a documentary auteur whose name appears in front of the film.

Nevertheless, even Dineen isn't immune to the realities of working for television, and one can sense this in her last three films. Most obviously there's the populist subject matter of *Geri* – in which Dineen's editing had to work around repeated advertising breaks. Then there's her increased use of narration. But these subtle changes in style and structure are largely to do with Dineen's post-*Blair* appetite to engage with live political debates. "The more I get into these bigger stories," she says, "the more it becomes my film in which the characters play parts, because I'm having to take you through it. I can't rely any longer on just the character."

In *The Lords' Tale* (2002) and *The Lie of the Land* (2007), Dineen chose not only to tackle complex and contentious topics head on (the abolition of the hereditary peerage and the decline of the countryside) but to have an opinion about them too. They are certainly angrier films that reveal her frustration at the dismantling of the past – in this case the House of Lords and the right to hunt – as a means of defining the future.

With her sympathy for ancient institutions and her penchant for old colonials, army officers and aristocrats, Dineen might easily be cast as a reactionary – an apologist for the Right. This would be entirely wrong. She is not conservative but counter-suggestive - sceptical of consensus opinion and unafraid to pursue an unfashionable line of enquiry. The indignation that permeates The Lords' Tale and The Lie of the Land is not simply at the easy assumptions of politicians, but at the easy assumptions of us all. For Peter Dale, who as head of documentaries for C4 commissioned both films, they display "a new kind of maturity" in their determined interrogation of 'modern' society. As he puts it, "The feat of these films has been to harness [a] quiet fury to her highly developed sense of what it is to be human."

■ 'The Molly Dineen Collection Volume 3', featuring 'Geri', 'The Lords' Tale' and 'The Lie of the Land', is released on BFI DVD on 5 December

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After taking on Berlusconi in his last satire 'The Caiman', Italy's Nanni Moretti has turned his attention to the Vatican. He talks to **Nick James**

GOD'S LONELY MAN

he interview below took place under unusually informal circumstances. During the London Film Festival I was invited to a lunch to meet all the Italian filmmakers whose work had been selected. What hardly anyone expected, however, was that Italy's great movie satirist Nanni Moretti would show up and be eager to mingle. I'm an admirer of many of Moretti's films, in particular Dear Diary (Caro diario, 1993), Aprile (1998) and The Son's Room (La stanza del figlio, 2001). But I'm also aware of his reputation for sometimes being difficult, high-handed and/or brusque. Since Moretti's new film We Have a Pope (Habemus Papam), though interesting, is one of his more marginal works, we had not pushed very hard for an interview with him.

Within moments I was introduced to Moretti, however—I hadn't met him before. "We'll just have a chat, shall we?" I suggested, but he said, "I would rather we did an interview." A no-prep, dive-in short interview, then, with the 'difficult' auteur—who could resist? Not me, anyway, because I liked him straight away. Yes, he does things that upset some people, such as leaving the table while the translator is giving you his last answer in English, but he is always back in time for the next question.

We Have a Pope is a curious film that seems to lose its way at times – rather like the lead character himself does. It begins with a wry depiction of the process of electing a new pope, with all the cardinals gathered in the Sistine Chapel. After invisible factional infighting quickly puts paid to the favourites, support gathers to a default candidate, Cardinal Melville (Michel Piccoli), a man seemingly without high ambition or enemies. But at the very moment he is about to be declared pontiff from the famous balcony in St Peter's Square, Melville has an attack of extreme humility and refuses to go through with the ceremony. This causes a bureaucratic meltdown that Moretti milks for all its latent humour.

ON THE THRESHOLD

In the new satire from director Nanni Moretti, right, Cardinal Melville (Michel Piccoli, left) hesitates when faced with his election as the new pope





The election of the pope is 'one of the few secrets left in the world that is beyond the reach of the media'

A psychiatrist is summoned (played by Moretti himself). He in turn recommends a colleague—his ex-wife—and arranges for Melville to visit her incognito. But Melville—a hard-to-read, whimsical old twinkler—uses the opportunity to slip his minders and wander around Rome trying to find inspiration for how he should proceed. All this provides a magnificent role for Piccoli, floating magisterially in his late pomp. But there's a feeling of drift about the film in that it never finds a satisfactory balance between its subject's serious misgivings and the gentle variety of satire Moretti has gone for. That said, it is fascinating topic for someone in Moretti's position to tackle, and I was glad that we got the chance to talk to him.

Nick James: I wondered if you wrote the script specifically with Michel Piccoli in mind?

Nanni Moretti: The idea came first. Piccoli was my first choice, but he did not vitiate the way the script was written. The script was finished before Piccoli was contacted.

NJ: So why was Piccoli your first choice?

NM: I really appreciate actors who are very skilful at their job but do not obliterate themselves in the role they are playing. Side by side you ought to able to see a great performance and the truth behind the character – and that is provided by the truth of the actor.

NJ: Did you have a specific pope in mind when writing the film?

NM: No. There are no echoes of real popes. What this fictitious pope has in common with all the stories we've heard about popes' elections is the fact that—according to the voting cardinals and to the new popes themselves—the moment the name was made public was immediately followed by a sense of unworthiness [felt by the elected pope] and of the enormity of the role that person was going to have to play for the rest of their life.

NJ: What has been the reaction to the film in Italy?

NM: All the diatribes happened before the movie was released. It sometimes happens with my films that people claim to be able to talk about them before they see them. And then some of the people who maybe have liked my previous movies didn't like it, but there hasn't been a split between believers and non-believers.

NJ: Anybody who grew up Catholic or in a Catholic country has ideas about the pope. Was this film a receptacle for all those doubts and anxieties in your own life about the pope?

NM: I've made II films in my career, and of those II, two have religious connotations: *The Mass Is Finished* [*La messa è finita*, 1985], in which I played a priest, and this one. To be truthful, I don't know why this theme has recurred at such a high percentage especially when you consider that I'm a non-believer. Some believers have unresolved issues that make them tackle the subject with a degree of animosity, but I have a total detachment towards the Catholic church, so therefore I can allow myself to give the pope a humane character.

NJ: What sort of research did you do into the behaviour of the cardinals?

NM: Obviously there is no video documentation. It is one of the few secrets left in the world that is beyond the reach of the media. What I was really interested in finding out was how the processions worked, and what robes they wore, so that within that framework of truth I could put my own story. My experience as a viewer has always altered my viewpoint as a director: seeing something that you don't like, you say to yourself, "I don't want to do that." I know that viewers have seen the mechanism of voting for the pope portrayed as a myriad of intrigues, lobbying and plotting. I was not interested in that.

NJ: Is it that ability to see yourself as an ordinary filmgoer that helps you determine how far to push the absurdity in your films?

NM: Sometimes when I tackle a new film I know I'm interested in taking a more 'classical' approach. In writing We Have a Pope, for instance, the storyline had to be as linear as other movies. It is requested and required that the viewer goes along with it, but it is up to the skill of the film director to lead. In some of my movies — Palombella Rossa [1989], for instance—I've pushed the absurdity very hard. In this movie I liked the idea of leading the viewer along and then unsettling them slightly to take a completely different direction.

■ 'We Have a Pope' is released on 2 December, and is reviewed on page 80





Palestine, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, child abuse, terrorism: in documentary, drama and his distinctive blend of the two forms, director Peter Kosminsky has never shied away from a controversial subject. He talks to Mark Duguid

ZONES OF CONFLICT

he rebel in Peter Kosminsky emerged surprisingly late. At school – a 'very academic' direct grant public school in Elstree – he was, he says, desperate to fit in, always conscious that his working-class, immigrant, left-wing background marked him out from his more privileged peers. He kept his head down, behaved himself. "I was one of those 12-going-on-35 children," he says.

His childhood, though poor, was happy. But it wasn't a background to breed conformity. His great-grandfather, having arrived in Britain, illiterate, from the Polish *shtetl* in the early 1900s, had bred a line of militant communists. Kosminsky remembers soaking in the forcefully expressed views of his father, a tailor's machinist, lifelong member of the Communist Party and "out-and-out Stalinist" — even after Hungary 1956. But he himself was never a communist: a "left-of-centre iconoclast", is how he describes himself: "whenever there's a sort of received wisdom or an orthodoxy, my instinct is to challenge it."

That instinct has drawn him to contentious subjects throughout what has been, by any measure, an illustrious career as a director. Thirty years in the industry – a milestone celebrated by a major BFI Southbank retrospective in December – have shown Kosminsky to be one of the most powerfully critical voices in contemporary television. From his documentaries, on such subjects as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Falkands War, to 2011's impressive four-part drama *The Promise*, exploring the origins of the 60-year occupation of Palestine via the story of a young woman's political awakening, he has fearlessly reported from disputed territories of all kinds. After crossing the border into drama in

1990, he took up residence in what has long been TV's own most disputed territory: drama documentary, still seen by many as an illegitimate, hybrid form.

True dramadocs make up less than half of Kosminsky's output since 1990, but it's these that have generated the most heat. No Child of Mine (1997) - which must count among the most hardto-watch TV dramas ever broadcast – followed the appalling 'conveyor-belt' sexual abuse of a young girl, first at the hands of her parents, then by paedophiles in the care system and finally as a child prostitute; it led to a tabloid hunt for the real girl whose story it told. Then there was The Government Inspector (2005), about the David Kelly affair, which managed to unite New Labour and Andrew Gilligan against it. But even these were but light showers compared to the great tempest that followed Shoot to Kill, his 1990 dramatisation of the Stalker investigation into the Royal Ulster Constabulary's 1982 killings of suspected Republican terrorists in Northern Ireland.

Dramadocs or not, Kosminsky's works engage with highly charged real-world events, often seeking to make an intervention in the all-important first draft of recent history — or, as in *The Promise*, to restore what subsequent drafts edited out. All are painstakingly researched (*The Promise* was II years from genesis to broadcast), and all share an urgent passion for justice on behalf of their subjects — the same passion that drove his documentaries. It's a body of work that has earned him regular headlines, critical rhapsodies and copious awards, including the 1999 Alan Clarke Award for outstanding creative contribution to television from BAFTA.

But he's had his share of setbacks. He almost fell at the first hurdle when, as a fresh graduate of the BBC's general trainee programme in 1982, a beginner's breach of protocol saw him fired from the plays department within three months. The ambitious young Kosminsky, already imagining himself a future head of BBC drama, fell hard: "The entire edifice came crashing down," he recalls. "I came quite close to having a nervous breakdown."

He begged his way back, but the door to drama was shut firm, and he found himself working instead on BBC1's daily magazine show *Nationwide*. It was here that he was given the chance to direct. He graduated to *Breakfast Time* and *Newsnight* before his principles led him into trouble again. In the summer of 1985, he was a leading opponent of the BBC governors' craven submission to government pressure to ban Paul Hamann's Northern Ireland documentary *At the Edge of the Union*. A 24-hour journalists' strike overturned the ban, but not long afterwards, Kosminsky was quietly told that his BBC career was unlikely to progress.

He jumped ship to Yorkshire Television, where he enjoyed a highly productive decade, making documentaries for the *First Tuesday* strand set up by John Willis (an early and lasting mentor), then critically acclaimed drama documentaries. But in 1995 he was out again, the first victim of a putsch initiated by Yorkshire's incoming managing director, Bruce Gyngell, the Australianborn godfather of breakfast television and a notorious moralist.

The current BFI retrospective charts the changes in Kosminsky's career, from 1980s documentaries such as the bleak report on Reagan-era homeless-







ness, *New York: The Quiet Catastrophe* (1987), through bruising 1990s dramadocs 15: *The Life and Death of Philip Knight* (1991) and *No Child of Mine*, to the more fictionalised but no less potent 2000s dramas represented by his US feature film *White Oleander* (2002), the New Labour saga *The Project* (2005) and the post-7/7 thriller *Britz* (2007). But one key work is missing. Over 20 years after its one and only broadcast, *Shoot to Kill* is still hidden from view. Kosminsky is fuming, and he's no longer prepared to keep his counsel.

While making *Shoot to Kill*, Kosminsky had no illusions that it was going to be easy. But he was confident in his research and his source, detective John Thorburn (the deputy of John Stalker, and the man who effectively ran the inquiry day-to-day), and was incensed when senior managers at Yorkshire – following advice from a Belfast barrister representing the broadcasters' insurers – opted to settle, rather than contest, a defamation suit brought by Sir John Hermon, chief constable of the RUC. (This was despite a convincing legal opinion that a countersuit claiming that Hermon's allegations effectively defamed Thorburn would be likely to scare the litigant off.)

Following Thorburn's testimony, the drama (as scripted by Michael Eaton and directed by Kosminsky) certainly presented Hermon as an obstacle to the investigation, though it stopped well short of accusing him of authorising any shoot-to-kill policy. But as Kosminsky remembers it, the chief constable was particularly riled by a "silly and, as it turned out, costly error": a scene in the film of a lunchtime meeting at which Hermon





(played by T.P. McKenna) is poured a glass of brandy. In the close shot, the measure was a moderate single, but in the preceding wide, an overenthusiastic extra had poured a very generous double. Kosminsky, editing on a Steenbeck, had missed it; Hermon didn't.

The terms of the settlement barred any repeat broadcast. A request to screen the film on More4 in 2008 was rebuffed by ITV. Kosminsky was "disappointed", but not altogether surprised. When the BFI season came up (by which time Hermon was dead, and therefore couldn't legally be defamed), Kosminsky argued that a small public cinema screening didn't constitute a broadcast – only to get another no. In the absence of any explanation, he is left guessing why: "I think the attitude of the [ITV] lawyers – and I don't know this for a fact, because they won't talk to me – is: 'Why take the risk? What possible gain is there for us?' I think that's deeply depressing. The fact that this show, it appears, will now never be seen again, when people still write about it in books... I think is quite wrong."

Blurring the boundaries

Though it's where he made his name, Kosminsky insists he was never drawn to drama documentary; at first he was "quite uncomfortable" with the form. He admits to two different motives for overcoming his doubts: publicly, it was the need to tell a story that had become impossible in documentary terms – because the subjects were either dead or wouldn't talk on camera. Privately, though, he saw himself as "a bloke who had always wanted to work in drama, who had fucked up royally at the very first hurdle, and who had moved into another genre that wasn't quite such a natural home – and was looking all the time for ways to get back."

Peter Kosminsky

♠ All the same, his work has always remained close to the critically contended borders of drama and documentary. And so, like Peter Watkins, Ken Loach, Jim Allen and many others before him, he has found himself dogged by charges that in 'blurring the boundaries' between fact and fiction, he has distorted the truth.

If Shoot to Kill fulfils the standard test for dramadoc attributed to the genre's acknowledged father figure, Leslie Woodhead - that there must be 'no other way to tell it' - Kosminsky admits to becoming more relaxed about the form since then. His own rule, he says, is to ask himself constantly, "Is it misleading?" The risk of misleading is a real one, he concedes - though rarely for the reasons the critics of dramadocs assume. "It'll almost always not be political prejudice – it'll be [for the sake of better drama," he explains. "It'll make it easier to understand, it'll take me on to the next point I want to make more fluently, it'll be just dramatically more economical." And, he counters, documentary is no less subjective a form than drama. Yet even after the 'TV fakery' scandals of the 1990s, critics persist in seeing documentary (albeit not all documentary) as inherently more truthful than drama documentary.

It's the purpose of drama documentary to open — or reopen — a public debate, and the cry of 'distortion' routinely endured by its makers is arguably the entrance fee. But the debate can have a distorting effect of its own, as Kosminsky found with *The Government Inspector*, when a fixation on the veracity of one particular scene — showing Tony Blair playing the guitar while discussing with Alastair Campbell what to do about David Kelly — overshadowed what for the director was the piece's most significant revelation: its evidence that reporter Andrew Gilligan had, despite his denials, amended the record of his interview with Kelly — evidence based on a forensic examination of Gilligan's personal organiser.

In The Project, The Government Inspector and Britz - which highlights the clumsy and counterproductive targeting of young British Muslims by state forces - Kosminsky has delivered arguably the most sustained critique of New Labour and its works in TV drama. So it's a shock to learn that he's a Labour Party member – "a very critical member, obviously", he laughs - albeit one who only rejoined this year in the wake of Ed Miliband's leadership victory, after quitting in 1983. But he has never been party-political in his work, seeing his primary concern, at least in recent years, as the effect of public policy on apparently ordinary individuals; his protagonists are frequently pushed to take a stand against unjust, inhumane or inadequate decisions imposed from elsewhere.

15: The Life and Death of Philip Knight — the shocking story of a deeply troubled and ultimately suicidal Welsh teenager comprehensively failed by the care system — followed Kosminsky's own initiation as a parent, and began a cycle of dramas taking child victims as their starting point. No Child of Mine, Walking on the Moon (1999) and White Oleander explored the failure of parents and authorities to care for and protect children from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, while The Innocents (2000) showed the neglect of the medical establishment in the face of a catalogue of



'In the earlier days, my attitude was: "This is a story that needs to be told. People had better take their medicine."

botched operations on babies and infants performed by two incompetent Bristol surgeons.

These films entered sometimes harrowing territory, not least the profoundly distressing *No Child of Mine*. Does Kosminsky ever worry that his drama might be too much for an audience to endure? "More now than I did," he concedes. "In the earlier days, my attitude was: 'This is a story that needs to be told... People had better take their medicine.' Now I take a different view, which is: it's more important that people actually listen and engage and think about it."

Rules of engagement

The plight of children features, too, in *The Dying of the Light*, which showed juvenile soldiers in hock to Liberian warlords. But that film also sits on the edge of another subset of Kosminsky's work, set in conflict zones. This group includes not just *Shoot to Kill* but also 1999's *Warriors*—perhaps his masterpiece, and the first of two collaborations with writer Leigh Jackson—which presented the impossible, hands-tied mission of UN soldiers on 'peace-keeping' duties in Serb-held Bosnia, and *The Promise*, in which a young British soldier in Palestine in 1948 has his neutrality tested after witnessing atrocities by Zionist terrorists.

Shoot to Kill aside, these films show a sympathy with the ordinary soldier wrestling with ill-fitting rules of engagement — a sympathy that's perhaps unusual for a filmmaker on the Left. The director dates this sensitivity back to his 1987 documentary The Falklands War: The Untold Story, for which he largely bypassed the official accounts of politicians, journalists and the military high command in favour of the sometimes heartbreaking, sometimes stomach-churning testimonies of the ordinary soldiers who fought in the conflict and their families.

Alongside his great debt to John Willis ("everything I know about filmmaking, I learned from

him"), Kosminsky acknowledges the influence of the radical directors of the *Play for Today* era, particularly Ken Loach, Roland Joffé and Les Blair. Even if he doesn't necessarily share their ideological commitment ("they would think of me as terribly soft, wishy-washy"), he does see himself as maintaining their tradition of crusading drama: "Everyone else changed, and jettisoned that and started making *The X Factor*. I have doggedly continued doing what was being done when I went into television."

Kosminsky pays tribute to others keeping the flame burning, among them Guy Hibbert, Tony Marchant, Jimmy McGovern and David Hare. But he worries for the future. "What troubles me a bit is that all those people are quite old, and I'm very old," he says (he's actually a young 55). "I'm wondering where the next generation of people making this kind of stuff [is coming from]. Every time I give a talk at film school, it's always on the theme of not just getting in the industry because you want to get in the industry... It's a powerful medium, what have you got to say? We mustn't surrender the medium to escapist tosh."

Kosminsky, of course, is not about to surrender. He has at least two projects on the go, one about "doctors working in a litigious environment", the other a feature for Film4 about Nelson Mandela. Characteristically, it will be an against-the-grain portrait, bypassing the public saint of latter years to show instead the young revolutionary. "I want them to see him as a hero for who he really is," he says. "Mandela set up Umkhonto we Sizwe, which many of those who claim to admire him would call a terrorist organisation. I hope this film will help us form a truer sense of who he is, what he fought against, what he sacrificed and achieved."

■ The Peter Kosminsky season, including an appearance 'in conversation' on 13 December, is at BFI Southbank, London, from 2 to 22 December



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You better watch out. You better not cry.

Winner of the LFF's prize for best debut, the road movie 'Las acacias' anounces the arrival of a new directing talent from Argentina, Pablo Giorgelli. He talks to Mar Diestro-Dópido

FELLOW TRAVELLERS

ur individual trajectories through life are rarely simple or straightforward. Argentinian director Pablo Giorgelli's own journey took several intriguing detours before he came to direct his superb debut feature Las acacias. Against stiff competition, it recently won the London Film Festival's Sutherland Trophy for best first film - an award to add to the much coveted Camera d'Or he already picked up at Cannes earlier this year. Giorgelli has been a law student, a banker, the co-owner of a bar, a film editor, a maker of TV documentaries and commercials. Yet his passion for cinema prompted him to resign from a "ludicrously well-paid" job as a banker to enrol at the FUC (Fundación Universidad del Cine), the Buenos Aires film school with an enviable reputation as Argentina's most prolific incubator of talent. (Lisandro Alonso, Celina Murga and Pablo Trapero are only a few of those who've passed through its portals.)

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, given the ultimate outcome), Giorgelli's time at FUC coincided with the shattering economic crisis of 2001 that left Argentina in financial ruins. Within the space of a year, he found himself looking for nonexistent jobs, mourning his father's sudden death and getting divorced from his wife of ten years. But what came out of the ensuing "anguish and solitude", as he describes it, was a script that would further transform his life. "This is when the first ideas for *Las acacias* started to turn up," he recalls. "I was writing about my feelings, reflecting on my loneliness, but there was no story. But slowly those ideas started to transform into one, and a journey started taking form."

Co-written over two years with Salvador Roselli – a friend, and the scriptwriter of another road film, Carlos Sorín's charmingly uplifting *Bombón el perro* (2004) – *Las acacias* addresses problems of communication and fatherhood via the story of Rubén (Germán de Silva), a solitary Argentinian lorry driver who transports lumber from Paraguay to Buenos Aires. On one journey, his boss asks him to give a lift to indigenous single mother Jacinta (Hebe Duarte), who's travelling with her fivemonth-old daughter to join her family and find a job in Buenos Aires.

Barring a few stops en route, most of the film takes place in the cramped interior of the lorry's cab during the long journey to Buenos Aires. Gradually, a different notion of space comes into play. Giorgelli gives us barely any information on Rubén or Jacinta's past lives, allowing the viewer to get to know them at the same pace as they get to know each other – through subtle gestures, glances and body language as much as through speech.

He does, however, provide some insight into the two characters' social backgrounds in a metaphor-

ical, almost apocalyptic opening scene, beautifully filmed in a more documentary style that gives it a very different feel to the rest of the film. "A new motorway is being built that goes right through the forest and it really shocked me when I saw the acacias being sliced out," Giorgelli explains. "It feels like a cemetery. They burn the green leaves on top, so there's smoke everywhere and gigantic trees falling every minute."

Rubén is part of this chain of destruction; he even has a large scar on his body that physically connects the emotional load weighing him down with the heavy acacia trunks transported on his lorry (and glimpsed intermittently in the lorry's side mirrors) that give the film its title. "Acacias are a very common tree, not special at all," Giorgelli explains. "And for me that was important, because Rubén is a bit like an acacia himself: solitary, strong and noble."

The symbolic charge detonated by this ravaging of the forest inevitably brings to mind the disappearing indigenous population in certain parts of Latin America. As Giorgelli explains, "From Buenos Aires to the south of Argentina, the percentage of indigenous peoples is much lower than in the north or the rest of Latin America, because here the Indians were dispossessed of their lands and massacred." The question of the status of the continent's indigenous peoples has featured in many significant Latin American films of the last decade – from Pablo Trapero's Crane World (1999) and Adrián Caetano's Bolivia (2001), via the protagonists of Lisandro Alonso's films and the 'invisible' servants in the films of Lucrecia Martel, to Claudia Llosa's The Milk of Sorrow (2009) and the protagonist of Esteban Larraín's Alicia in the Land (2008).

In Las acacias, the Guaraní Jacinta is treated with visible hostility by the guard on the Argentinian border - and initially by Rubén himself too. "This is all part of the reality of Buenos Aires," Giorgelli points out. "I was interested in that migratory current. Ever since we started the script, I imagined Jacinta with Guaraní roots. I spent a lot of time working in Paraguay and Misiones [the province of Argentina bordering Paraguay], so I got acquainted with the area, with the people, and fell in love with their language. I found it fascinating that in Paraguay everyone speaks Spanish and Guaraní [which was banned by the dictatorship in Paraguay for many years]. I also thought that these two people have so little in common, they even speak a different language."

The key to the film's success lies in the casting of both leads. As Giorgelli says, "I had to make sure that they were perfect, because otherwise the film wouldn't work with them being filmed for long periods in such a small space." In fact both actors are nothing short of extraordinary. Determined to use a real lorry driver, Giorgelli interviewed about 250 of them in a year, but, he admits, "when I asked some of them to act in a certain way or to say a

specific line, it sounded too forced and unnatural." Still, the time he spent immersed in this world – observing the drivers' habits, spending time on their routes – clearly worked its way into *Las acacias*, channelled through his eventual choice for the role, veteran theatre actor Germán de Silva, whose understated performance gives the emotionally tormented Rubén a moving vulnerability and authenticity.

The casting of the captivating Hebe Duarte as Jacinta was down to pure chance. After Giorgelli had spent a long time looking for non-professional women in the markets and streets of Paraguay's capital Asunción, the fed-up casting director asked him once more what he actually wanted. Instinctively, Giorgelli pointed at her assistant – none other than Duarte. "Every time I recall the moment when we tested her I get emotional, because I could not believe how beautiful this woman was," he recalls. "For me it was very important she was a mother, and when we put her together with the baby, it was astonishing – they were a family. Still today when I watch the film it seems unbelievable to me that she's not the mother of that baby. Everyone asks me about that."

Small gestures

From one perspective, you could regard *Las acacias* as a typical example of the 'slow' and observational naturalist cinema predominant in film festivals the world over – think of the films of Giorgelli's





much emulated compatriot Lisandro Alonso. The natural assumption is that most of these works, often light on dialogue, are improvised or even unscripted. Giorgelli, however, begs to differ. "The other day somebody assumed that my script was only 12 pages long, but it's actually 85. Everything is very detailed and the scenes in which the characters don't speak are a page and a half long, and include ways of looking, small gestures, moods. For me it actually depends on what kind of film you are making. It's not that I like minimalism for the sake of it—I actually prefer narrative cinema!"

In fact, as Giorgelli points out, there is always something going on in *Las acacias*: "There's a story and it's driven by narrative. The scarcity of the dialogue is not an aesthetic decision made on a whim, but is determined by a story that speaks precisely about the difficulty of communicating with others." The silences not only speak volumes, but are also humorous in their own right, perfectly capturing the nervous tension and mistrust attendant on being forced to share a small space with a stranger.

A road movie of sorts, *Las acacias* unerringly captures the calming, almost beatific monotony of long journeys that allows us to absent-mindedly observe the world passing by, evoking another time when life had a different, slower tempo. Indeed, *Las acacias* is hard to place temporally, set in a recent past that could be anywhere between the 1970s and the 1990s. It's as if the world depicted

is enclosed in a time capsule – an aesthetic strategy that features in the work of another Argentinian director Giorgelli greatly admires, Lucrecia Martel.

Diego Poleri's subtle cinematography, alive to minute changes in light at different times of the day, reduces contrasts and softens edges to give the

'Acacias are a very common tree. Rubén is a bit like an acacia himself: solitary, strong and noble'

film a warmth — the quality of an ever so slightly faded old photograph. "We worked very hard with the light and the colour palette to give the film a particular chromatic identity," Giorgelli explains. "In the past when I was editing other people's work for a living, I really learned the cinematographic language — what I like and don't like. It's as if we [Giorgelli and his editor on *Las acacias*, his second wife María Astrauskas] got rid of everything else and just retained the essence."

In fact, in Las acacias there are no transition or

TOUCHING FROM A DISTANCE

'Las acacias', by director Pablo Giorgelli, top, throws Guaraní single mother Jacinta (Hebe Duarte, all pics) together with trucker Rubén (Germán de Silva) establishing shots of stunning sunsets etc. The focus is on the beauty of simple things, and the idea is that "you only see what they see", so everything is shot through the windscreen, using mirrors and reflections to striking effect. As Giorgelli admits, this was a risky strategy that could have made the film feel claustrophobic, but instead it creates the sense of an intimate personal space.

For Giorgelli, a promising new journey of his own has just begun. "I felt like a fraud because I don't come from a family of artists, and it's not until now that I've felt comfortable saying I work in the film world," he confesses. Now, with the international success of *Las acacias*, he has positioned himself virtually overnight as a key figure within the new generation of Argentinian filmmakers.

"Something is happening in Argentina," he enthuses. "In the 1990s there was an explosion of film schools, and now the problem is screening films, so you find many of them at festivals, and they even win the prizes. These filmmakers do whatever it takes to find a way to make and show their films. It's like a great force that constantly pushes forward, and it is so much easier now with the digital revolution. I think there's a very hopeful future."

■ 'Las acacias' is released on 2 December, and is reviewed on page 62









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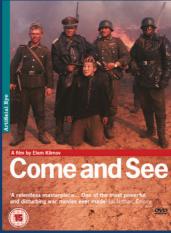
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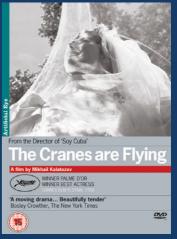
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Master of illusion

Raúl Ruiz, who died in August, has left behind a magisterial four-hour saga set in 19th-century Portugal that serves as a fittingly elegant summation of his life's work. **Jonathan Romney** explores the 'Mysteries of Lisbon'

Mysteries of Lisbon

Raúl Ruiz, 2010

The dominant mystery in Raúl Ruiz's Mysteries of Lisbon (Místerios de Lisboa) is that there is no mystery: everything is explained, sooner or later. No sooner does the narrator João raise the question of his parentage than we discover his mother's identity; the story of his father follows closely. Nothing is withheld for long; you might call this a story of transparency, in which all truths are eventually available to the eye of knowledge. Hence the overtly voyeuristic staging of one bedroom tryst, with heavy curtains ostentatiously pulled aside to frame the action for our benefit.

Based on a novel by the prolific Portuguese writer Camilo Castelo Branco (1825-1890), Ruiz's chamber epic follows a topos of 19th-century fiction, according to which all things are knowable – at once by the author, the narrator and (implicitly or otherwise) God, represented here by the omniscient, omnipresent, protean Father Dinis.

Scripted by Carlos Saboga, Mysteries of Lisbon might at first appear unusually sober by Ruiz standards. It's Viscontian in its austere elegance; the sumptuously staged period action is often executed in flamboyantly extended single takes - characteristically in elegantly gliding shots, as if the camera were executing a stately dance around the characters. Gorgeously photographed (digitally) by André Szankowski, the film frequently fixes its actors in compositions that resemble tableaux vivants, modelled variously on salon paintings of the era and Spanish Golden Age interiors.

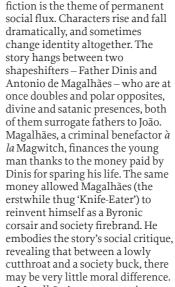
Mysteries fulfils all the requirements of the European prestige costume drama, and exists in two forms — as the 266-minute theatrical release, and as a TV series in six one-hour episodes. By all accounts Ruíz, who died in August 2011, preferred the cinema cut, perhaps rightly: the abridged Mysteries has a self-contained concision (all things being



Father Dinis is in more ways than one the servant of God, the narrative seemingly being his manipulation in the name of divine providence

relative) that allows its themes to resound with each other, as in a sealed echo chamber.

Without having read him, one suspects that Castelo Branco might be ranked among the most obscure major writers of his century (Manoel de Oliveira adapted his Doomed Love and based Day of Despair on his death). One guesses that Castelo Branco was a candidly derivative writer, for Mysteries of Lisbon, written in 1854, clearly owes much to Balzac and to the prolific French serial writer Eugène Sue, author of the similarly involved Mysteries of Paris (1842-3).



Particularly characteristic of such

Magalhaes's counterpart is Father Dinis: priest, spy, puppeteer, master of disguise – and in more ways than one, servant of God, the course of the narrative seemingly being Dinis's manipulation in the name of divine providence. Dinis represents the holy side of that quintessential 19th-century figure, the endlessly mobile social manipulator – the underground Napoleon; in Balzac, this figure is played by the criminal Vautrin,

one of whose alter egos is a priest. Dinis may be an angelic Vautrin, but he has a sinister aura, as incarnated by the saturnine, selfeffacingly mischievous Adriano Luz. A shadowy presence, he glides in and out of the action, appearing and disappearing through overt tricks of camera movement – at one point vanishing during a single shot, leaving only his hat and cloak behind. His multiplicity is revealed in an extraordinary scene in which João ventures into Dinis's secret sanctum (his backstage area, if you like) containing the costumes and props of his former selves; as Magalhães speculates, the priest too may be just another persona.

The suggestion is that all selves are provisional – just as, in a Christian perspective, the earthly being is a transitory disguise for the soul. Hence there's a dizzying whirlwind of parallels – of tales of doomed loves, lost parents, ruined fortunes, in which even Dinis discovers the secret truth of his own origin. The theological gist of this is that everything is created – by a divine arch-novelist, as it were. The film constantly asserts its own fictionality, not least by urging us to believe in its reality - "It is not a work of fiction, it is a diary of suffering," goes the opening epigraph. In fact, this is a standard ploy of the classic European novel one that draws attention, paradoxically, to the bottom line of fictiveness. We are told, with dizzying perversity, "In life there are events and coincidences of such extravagance that no novelist would ever dare to invent them." The *mise en scène* too highlights theatricality, with stagehand-like servants often shifting furniture into position. A key leitmotif is João's toy puppet theatre, which periodically represents the action we're about to watch.

While much of the film plays superficially as a classical costume drama, it nevertheless abounds in Ruizian touches. The most *outré* is Magalhães's servant, perpetually executing an agitated tap-dance. Repeated devices include Ruiz's patented use of furniture that floats free of its moorings, notably in the haunting final shot; a repeated image of young João in



BROAD CANVAS

A panorama of 19th-century Portuguese society, it follows the machinations of Dinis (Adriano Luz, facing page with Maria João Bastos), with a cast including Ruiz regular Melvil Poupaud, below left

profile, as if detached from the action he witnesses; and the consistent staging of action outside windows, most notably the tussle that takes place behind Dinis's coach, culminating farcically in a pair of legs suspended in mid-air.

All these could be seen as gratuitous flourishes of auteur style, but they serve to undermine the naturalistic illusion, to remind us that everything we see is an effect of narration – and perhaps, more than that, of dream. Realistic coherence collapses towards the end. Learning that he is essentially a supporting character in other people's stories, João (by now revealed to be Pedro) appears to shoot himself dead. But he reappears alive and travels overseas, presumably to Brazil. There, on his deathbed, in a chamber uncannily replicating his childhood room, he starts dictating the narrative we have been following for over four hours. Ruiz then cuts back to João's childhood, with the suggestion that the boy, delirious or dying, has invented or dreamed everything. As João's bed drifts into the sunlight of his window, and a closing whiteout, the story at last dissolves before us, an ephemeral mirage of life.

While Mysteries of Lisbon was not in fact Ruiz's very last film, it could be seen as a valedictory summum of his oeuvre - his fabulously omnivorous contemplation of imagination and history. The film flickers with echoes of Ruiz's work: stories about fateful childhood (Treasure Island, Comédie de l'innocence), multiple identity (Three Lives and Only One Death), illusion (Life Is a Dream, after Calderón), society and memory (his magisterial Proust adaptation Time Regained, to which Mysteries could be considered a crypto-sequel).

One could see Mysteries as a disguised autobiography, 'Ruiz' almost rhyming with 'Dinis' - for the Chilean was himself a disguise artist as well as a manipulator of story, masquerading variously as a French, a Portuguese, even an American filmmaker. But most of all, this surpassingly eerie saga is surely Ruiz's very own The Tempest, in which the director as Prospero fabulist, philosopher, dreamer contemplates the lives of his puppet cast and finally closes the lid on his toy box of fiction. For credits and synopsis, see page 70

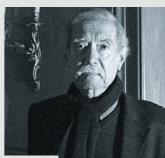
Creator of myths

Before his death in August, Raúl Ruiz spoke to Michel Ciment

Ageing has turned me into a creator of myths, in order to pass the time when I can't sleep at night. The most recent myth is as follows: our present is an aeroplane flight. We are all dead, we resuscitate every day, we board the first available flight. But contrary to Christian beliefs, it's not a flight towards a bright future, but rather towards a strange past. To me, it is always the 19th century. During the flight, we always experience turbulence. I have other myths, but I won't bother you with my nightly mythology. But they always relate to this travel to the 19th century.

Portuguese was formed in opposition to Spanish. It's the Galician-Portuguese language, a medieval language spoken by the Spaniards. The medieval lyric poems the 'Cantigas de Santa Maria' were written in Galician-Portuguese. But Portugal's numerous independence wars have forced language to become elusive and hidden. It's a language that loves to hide. People are used to saying one thing to mean another. They are not straightforward; they don't say things clearly. I believe this enables us to make fiction that 'overflows'.

Everything becomes somewhat dramatic when you're not sure if you



RAUL RUIZ

are going to survive. That's obvious. Every day is a victory. I didn't know if I would make it until the end of the shoot. But in the end, I did a lot more because everything flowed perfectly during the shoot. It's a joy to finally see Portuguese actors perform in Portuguese instead of using bizarre languages they have to adapt to. Some Portuguese actors are forced to memorise dialogue in German or French. And French is not as familiar as it used to be. This makes people lose about 80 per cent of their energy. And that's what I had to gain. This film is also a sort of - I wouldn't say closure, because I don't like that, and I already did another film after it, a short film about Jean Painlevé.

Las acacias

Argentina/Spain 2011 Director: Pablo Giorgelli Certificate 12A 86m 6s

Winner of the Caméra d'Or at Cannes this year, Pablo Giorgelli's first feature as director is in the vein of the realist, minimalist dramas of lower-class life that characterise the strongest strand of contemporary Argentine cinema. If following in the footsteps of such filmmakers as Lisandro Alonso, Carlos Sorín and Pablo Trapero might seem a fool's errand, Giorgelli has enough integrity and class in his own right to overcome comparisons. This is an extremely accomplished and affecting debut.

It may be that Giorgelli has even less going on, on the surface of his film, than any of those mentioned, with the possible exception of Alonso. Las acacias is a road movie that hardly gets out of its vehicle, gives only the barest glimpses of its topography and offers no more than a trace of a supporting character. The focus is inside the cab of a truck and on the faces of driver Rubén and his passenger Jacinta, the camera alert for clues to their inner lives and immediate feelings. At 84 minutes, this is a lean, economical exercise in human mapping. And with able performers (Germán de Silva a professional, Hebe Duarte following in the region's fine tradition of non-actors) it's a reminder of what can be achieved with so little.

Essentially this is a portrait of loneliness and parenthood, those two conditions being inextricably related here. De Silva looks like a greyhound gone to seed - wiry, fit once but now grizzled and greying. His feelings are buried deep (taciturn doesn't cover his unwillingness with words) but the skill of the actor is such that in Rubén's watchfulness we suspect a human being still lurks. Eventually we learn of the son he didn't know as a child and barely sees now; and in his growing rapport with Jacinta's baby we glimpse the father he might have been. It's unclear why he wasn't present for his own child, but obvious that the lack of such shared love has left him trapped within himself.

Duarte's performance is equally subtle, her sphinx-like face nevertheless showing plenty of character, not least Jacinta's self-possession. This only cracks when the character thinks she is unobserved; while crying at night, she has no idea that Rubén is awake beside her, but the revelation of her grief helps to thaw him and bring the two together. Again, we don't learn where the father

of her child is; it's enough to know of the absence, and the unhappiness that is driving her towards a new life.

The dialogue in Giorgelli's script, written with Salvador Roselli, is unsurprisingly bare. The information is in the eyes, and in the passing details: Rubén's offer of tea signalling the end of hostilities; his allowing the absurdly cute baby to bite his hand in the night; the lonely ritual of his truck-stop routines.

The director's willingness to stay within the restricted cab reminds one of some of Abbas Kiarostami's best work. And when the story steps outside, it's to good effect, whether offering a glimpse of the trucker's life or the meagre society on this umbilical road between Paraguay and its wealthier, not always friendly, neighbour.

Incidentally, Giorgelli is a graduate of Buenos Aires's superb film school, the Fundación Universidad del Cine, along with Trapero, Alonso and *Las acacias*'s executive producer Ariel Rotter. Giorgelli edited Rotter's first feature in 2001, *Solo por hoy*. His own debut may have been a long while coming but it does the pedigree proud.

Demetrios Matheou

CREDITS

Produced by Ariel Rotter Verónica Cura Alex Zito Pablo Giorgelli

Pablo Giorgelli Screenplay Pablo Giorgelli Salvador Roselli

Director of Photography Diego Poleri Editor

María Astrauskas Art Direction Yamila Fontán Sound Martín Litmanovich

Costumes Violeta Gauvry Laura Donari

©[no company given] **Production**

Companies An Airecine, Utópica Cine, Proyecto Experience production in co-production with . Armónika Entertainment (Snain) Tarea Fina, Travesía Producciones, Hibou Producciones (Argentina) With the support of INCAA - Instituto Nacional de Cinematografía y Artes Audio, TVE, Programa Ibermedia, ICAA -Instituto de Cinematografía y Artes Audiovisuales and the financing of ICO Instituto de Crédito

Executive Producers Verónica Cura Ariel Rotter

CAST Germán de Silva Rubén Hebe Duarte

Jacinta
Nayra Calle Mamani
Anahí
Matilde Jazmín Quisne

Matilde Jazmín Quispe Mamaní Anahís cousin Mónica Sosa

Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1] Subtitles

Distributor Verve Pictures

7,749 ft +0 frames

Another Earth

USA 2011

Director: Mike Cahill Certificate 12A 92m 16s

In Mike Cahill's debut fiction feature, co-written with its star Brit Marling, a doppelganger of our planet sits in the sky and becomes an object of fascination and speculation. The space oddity, a classic thought experiment made literal, may not be the most incredible feature of this stylised exercise in trite dramatic irony, which has received extravagant praise often dominated by reverent plot summary. The deep-dish sci-fi overlay does not disguise that this Sundance prizewinner substitutes screenplay gestures for genuine, earned moments of emotion and observed behaviour, and executes a premise utterly worn out from global-connection prestige pictures and indie melodrama alike: two people are brought together violently, and anonymously; one nonetheless pursues a relationship with the other, without revealing their identity...

The cosmically connected pair are Rhoda (Marling), a student about to go to MIT, and John (William Mapother), a family man with the bad luck to run into her after her night of tipsy celebration. Their worlds collide with their cars: each survives, but John's passengers, his wife and child, perish, and Rhoda spends a few years in jail. That being not the sort of thing that happens to promising young students, she emerges lost and guilt-ridden, and improbably takes a job as a janitor at her old high school.

Hovering in the background to all this human suffering, literally, is that objective correlative up in the heavens. Nobody knows quite what to make of the planet, though some armchair philosophising bordering on self-help is made manifest in a voiceover by a musing scientist. As represented in the low-budget, conspicuously handheld production (which resourcefully draws on Apollo photography for its special effect), the orb is a structuring conceit from the get-go more than it's a felt reality, and for many viewers who know the premise in advance, it may seem surprisingly oblique.

One wishes the same could be said of Rhoda and John's central reunion.
Obeying the screenplay's imperative, the mopey university scholar manqué seeks out the sullen, musically inclined widower and insists on being his housecleaner. Romance follows such

exceedingly precious courtship quirks as videogames and saw music; guidance comes in the unpardonable form of a wise fellow janitor, played by Kumar Pallana (of Wes Anderson fame). The scenario, which never comes alive beyond feeling wishfully symbolic, also fails to take flight partly because of the lackadaisical performances of its leads. Marling moons about, unable to give full voice to a hard-to-realise character, while Mapother, his face a heavy mask, is unusually unengaging; both burdened with thudding lines at the worst moments, they're especially weak when called upon for charged silences or outbursts.

Much described and praised with the usual underdog indie rhetoric, Cahill's production could be thought of as not subpar drama but adequate sci-fi. But the bottom line of the interplanetary experiment (which makes one yearn for *Melancholia*'s ironically merciful ending) is that the movie masquerades as soul-baring, thoughtful material without actually doing the hard work its high stakes require.

Nicolas Rapold

CREDITS

Produced by

Hunter Gray Mike Cahill Brit Marling Nick Shumaker

Written by Mike Cahill

Brit Marling Cinematographer Mike Cahill Editor

Mike Cahill
Production Designer

Darsi Monaco

Music

Fall on Your Sword

Composers: Phil Mossman Wills Bates Sound Design

Ryan M. Price

Costume Designer

Alleen Diana

Visual Effects

Bentlight Digital

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Production Companies Fox Searchlight Pictures

presents an Artists

Public Domain

A film by Mike Cahill **Executive Producers** Tyler Brodie Paul Mezey

CAST

William Mapother John Burroughs Brit Marling Rhoda Williams Matthew-Lee Erlbach Alex DJ Flava

himself Meggan Lennon Maya Burroughs AJ Diana

John's son

Dr Richard Berendzen
himself/narrator
Kumar Pallan

Dolby
Colour by
Harbor Films
Prints by
DeLuxe New York
[1.85:1]

Purdeep

Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)

8,304 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Argentine truck driver Rubén is returning to Buenos Aires from Paraguay. At the border he picks up a woman, Jacinta, and her five-month-old daughter, having agreed with his boss to take them to the capital.

At first Rubén is rude and unfriendly, uninterested in his passengers or their comfort. At one stop, he considers buying Jacinta a bus ticket and abandoning her. But he decides against it and gradually softens towards the mother and her child. Jacinta is friendly but wary, and plays along with Rubén's silence; as he begins to relax, she responds. He talks about the son he hardly knows; she vaguely acknowledges that the girl's father is not in their lives, and that she is heading for a new life with her cousin in Buenos Aires. When they reach their destination, Rubén asks if they can see each other again, and Jacinta agrees.

SYNOPSIS Connecticut, US, the near future. Rhoda is waiting to go away to college. A second Earth, a double of our own, appears in the sky. Distracted while driving one night, Rhoda crashes into another car, killing the wife and son of John Burroughs. She is sentenced to four years in jail.

Rhoda returns from prison to live at home. She takes a job as a janitor in her old school. Drawn to John out of guilt, Rhoda starts cleaning his house for him, though he doesn't know who she is. Rhoda enters a contest to win a trip to the second Earth.

A relationship develops between Rhoda and John. When Rhoda wins the contest, she confesses to John that she was the driver of the car that killed his wife and son; he throws her out of the house. Rhoda offers John her ticket to the second Earth in the hope that his family may still be alive there.

John takes the ticket and travels to the other Earth. Rhoda encounters her double from the other Earth outside her house.



The ghost of Christmas aghast: 'Arthur Christmas'

Arthur Christmas

USA/United Kingdom 2011 **Director: Sarah Smith** Certificate U 97m 23s

The most honest praise one can give the animated Arthur Christmas is to say that its heart is in the right place. But Arthur Christmas may be burdened by the name of its British studio, Aardman Animations – and here one must explain that this is a 3D computeranimated fantasy, which will have many loyal Aardman fans sighing in disappointment. The story and characters were developed by Aardman in Bristol, with the CGI done in California by Sony Pictures Animation. Viewers yearning for another stopmotion, handmade Aardman creation à la Morph or Wallace and Gromit must wait for next March's release. The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists.

Arthur Christmas's spin on the Santa story is that Father Christmas is a dynasty, or a 'firm' in the monarchical sense. There's an incumbent Santa (voiced by Jim Broadbent), an old-relic former Santa (Bill Nighy) and an impatient Santa-in-waiting (Hugh Laurie). There's also the gormlessly klutzy Arthur Christmas (James McAvov), dismissed as a squib though he plainly has the strongest spirit of the family. The film envisions a thoroughly modern Christmas operation, with Santa marshalling an army of elves aboard a giant Thunderbirds-style aircraft. However, one present for a little girl goes undelivered, and the horrified Arthur sets out to get it to its destination before daybreak, teaming up with Nighy's aged Santa aboard his mothballed sleigh.

The film is directed and co-scripted by British comedy writer Sarah Smith. which makes Arthur Christmas the second big cartoon film recently to be directed by a woman, following Kung Fu Panda 2 (directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson) Arthur Christmas feels fantastically busy, even by cartoon

standards; in the opening minutes, Santa's elves leap and swing through cities to deliver Christmas on time, frantically trying all the while to stay unseen. (There's a good gag in which a noise-making toy farm is treated by the Christmas characters like an unexploded bomb.) The film is full of madcap flights, crashlandings and giant sub-polar control rooms, plus more surprising images, such as a savannah's worth of African wildlife floating magically in the night sky.

The characters look less appealing. There's a touch of traditional Aardman about their bulbous noses and stickyout ears, but their faces are like jokeshop masks. What really lets the film down, though, are many of its voices, with charmlessly noisy elves and McAvoy's blaring Arthur sounding

CREDITS

Produced by Peter Lord

David Sproxton Carla Shelley Steve Pegram

Written by Peter Baynham Sarah Smith

Edited by James Cooper John Carnochan Production Designe

Evgeni Tomov **Music** Harry Gregson-Williams Supervising Sound

Editors Julian Slater Jimmy Boyle Senior Animation Supervisor Alan Short Imagery & Animation Sony Pictures

Imageworks Animation Aardman Animations

©Sony Pictures Production

Companies Columbia Pictures and Sony Pictures Animation present an Aardman production

glancing background details to be picked up on umpteen DVD viewings, a

like an obnoxious presenter from

children's TV. Thank heavens for

Nighy's curmudgeonly grandad,

callous cracks and bloodyminded

Christmas has the expected 'extras' -

who lifts the film singlehanded with his

steering of the characters into calamity.

Like all good family cartoons, Arthur

soundly worked-out humanist moral about how anyone can be Santa. However, the irksome soundtrack and worn Santa subject may mean that Arthur Christmas has a modest shelf life beside Pixar's blockbusters. Just think what Aardman might have done with a creepier take on Saint Nick. Last year's Finnish fantasy, Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale, could have been sublime

in stop-motion. •• Andrew Osmond

VOICE CAST James McAvoy Arthur

Hugh Laurie Bill Nighy Jim Broadbent

Santa Imelda Stauntor Mrs Santa Ashley Jensen Bryony Marc Wootton

Laura Linnev North Pole computer Eva Longoria Chief De Silva

Ramona Marquez

Michael Palin

Dolby Digital/Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS Prints by Г1.85:17

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing

8.764 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS Father Christmas is revealed to be a centuries-old family dynasty, modernising with the times. The present-day Santa delivers presents with the help of a huge aircraft and an army of elves. The project is coordinated from the North Pole by Santa's hyper-efficient son Steve, who's impatient to become Santa himself. Meanwhile Steve's accident-prone younger brother Arthur is dismissed by everyone as a clown.

The Christmas Eve delivery seems to go perfectly, but afterwards Arthur is aghast to hear that one present (a tricycle for a little girl) hasn't been delivered. Santa and Steve are prepared to accept this but Grandsanta – the previous Santa, now a 136vear-old curmudgeon – shows Arthur his old sleigh. Grandsanta and Arthur embark on a chaotic race to deliver the present before Christmas morning, joined by stowaway female elf Bryony. The journey is disastrous, involving several wrong turns and the sleigh being mistaken for a hostile UFO by the world's authorities. Finally the sleigh is blown up by missiles, but Arthur heroically delivers the trike to the little girl. Witnessing his deeds, Santa and Steve realise that Arthur deserves to be the next Father Christmas.

The Artist

France/Belgium 2011 Director: Michel Hazanavicius Certificate PG 100m 23s

The Artist is a whole lot better than Michel Hazanavicius's two OSS 117 movies: better gags, better performances, viable emotional arc, more sophisticated visual style. The OSS diptych was essentially an exercise in pastiche: Cairo, Nest of Spies (2006) and Lost in Rio (2009) parodied various clichés of 50s and 60s cinema respectively, guying the stupidity, racism and sexism of 'the French James Bond'. The results were pretty crass, but pleasing to a sufficiently large European audience to persuade Thomas Langmann to take on the risk of producing Hazanavicius's dream of a neo-silent movie: a real-life echo of the plot of Mel Brooks's Silent Movie. Here, Hazanavicius isn't pastiching the styles or film language of the late 1920s; he's rehashing the story of A Star Is Born – a fast-rising female star secretly becomes guardian angel to the older man she loves, whose career is on the rocks backdating it to the transition from silents to talkies (cf. Garbo trying to save the career of John Gilbert), and doing it almost entirely without sync sound or dialogue. It's an obviously outré one-off project, but cuddly enough to be a crowd-pleaser, conquering much the same mid-market audience that fell for Jeunet's Amélie (2001). The appeal of stories about cute young women doggedly in love with 'difficult' men is clearly constant.

Hazanavicius has explained in countless interviews since the film's success in Cannes that the itch to make a neo-silent "probably" arose from his admiration for "the great mythical directors of silent cinema" (he cites amongst others Hitchcock, Lang, Ford and Lubitsch – all of whom are much better known for their talkies than their early silents) and his conviction that directorial storytelling skill and expressiveness counted for more than the writing or the performances in great silent films. (He nonetheless took his stars Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo to the Cinémathèque to see Murnau's Sunrise and City Girl and Borzage's Seventh Heaven, to show them silentmovie acting techniques.) It's hard to see why all this enthusiasm and research was necessary when fidelity to the styles and tropes of the late 1920s is the least of the film's issues. Aki Kaurismäki's Juha (1999) was a neosilent for true cinephiles: a melodrama which mirrored the evolution of silent film grammar as it went along. The Artist merely uses the generic form of silent cinema to freshen up a tragicomic love story with a happy ending.

Aside from the stunts performed by a well-trained dog, the best gags in The Artist are anachronistically conceptual, as when the Douglas Fairbanks-like star George Valentin starts hearing sound effects just after he's been told that silents are dead. Dujardin's performance as George is only a small step on from his pompous secret agent Hubert in

Films



The sound of silents: Jean Dujardin

the OSS 117 films; in the kind of performance that once gave postmodernism a good name, Bejo is genuinely charming as the naive ingénue who becomes an 'it girl'. The stars' concluding tap routine (now with sync sound) provides a barnstorming finale and gives Dujardin his only two words of dialogue, spoken with an authentic Maurice Chevalier accent: "Wiz pleasure." There's an intriguing dedication at the end of the credits to the director's boyhood Arab friend Kamel Ech-Cheik, who co-scored OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies, which suggests that the whole thing has a deeper personal meaning for Hazanavicius. At core, though, The Artist is at best a novelty hit, right up there with Benny Hill's single 'Ernie, the Fastest Milkman in the West'. Tony Rayns

CREDITS

Produced by Thomas Langmann Written by Michel Hazanavicius Director of Photography Guillaume Schiffman Editors Michel Hazanavicius Production Designet Laurence Bennett Music Ludovic Bource Sound Mixer Michael Krikorian Costume Designer Mark Bridges

©La Petite

Reine/Studio 37/La Classe Américaine/JD Prod/France 3 Cinéma/Jouror Productions/UFIIm

Productions/uriin Production Companies

Thomas Langmann presents a La Petite Reine, Studio 37, La Classe Américaine, JD Prod, France 3 Cinéma, Jouror Productions, uFilm co-production A film by Michel Hazanavicius
With the participation of Canal+ and CinéCinéma and France Télévisions With the support of the Federal Government Tax Shelter of Belgium and Tax Shelter Investors

Executive Producers
Daniel Delume

Daniel Delume
Antoine de Cazotte
Richard Middleton
Film Extracts
The Mark of Zorro

The Mark of Zorro (1920)

CAST

Jean Dujardin George Valentir Bérénice Bejo Peppy Miller James Cromwell Clifton, the chauffeur Penelope Ann Miller Doris

Malcolm McDowell butler at audition Missi Pyle Constance Beth Grant

Peppy's maid

Ed Lauter

Peppy's butler

Joel Murray

policeman at fi

policeman at fire Ken Davitian pawnbroker John Goodman Al Zimmer Uggy

Dolby Digital/DTS In Black and White [1.33:1]

Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

9,035 ft +3 frames

SYNOPSIS Hollywood, 1927. Emerging from the premiere of his spy thriller *A Russian Affair*, the vain, limelight-hogging star George Valentin is photographed with his fan Peppy Miller. Peppy auditions as a dancer at Kinograph Studios, is spotted by George and (over the objections of studio boss Zimmer) offered a role in his new thriller *A German Affair*. Peppy soon becomes an audience favourite.

1929. Zimmer announces an end to production of silents, but George insists that sound is a passing fad and leaves the company to produce the silent jungle adventure *Tears of Love* himself. His movie opens on the same day as Peppy's hit new vehicle, and George is ruined. His wife Doris leaves him and he moves into his office with his faithful valet Clifton. Peppy becomes a major star.

1931. George fires the long-unpaid Clifton and auctions off all his effects. The following year, despairing and drunk, George starts a fire in his office. His dog fetches help, and George wakes in a bed in Peppy's mansion. Clifton is now working for Peppy. Peppy tells Zimmer that she will quit the company unless he co-stars George in her next film. George meanwhile discovers that it was Peppy who bought all his possessions at auction; he returns to his burnt-out office, intending to kill himself, but Peppy arrives just in time to stop him. Soon George and Peppy are performing a dazzling tap routine together in a new Kinograph musical.



Home alone: Zawe Ashton

Dreams of a Life

United Kingdom/Ireland 2011 Director: Carol Morley

Joyce Vincent entered most people's lives fleetingly as the subject of a 2006 press cutting, shocking in its brevity, about a London woman whose skeletal remains were discovered almost three years after her death in a bedsit, in front of a flickering television and surrounded by half-wrapped Christmas presents. The mystery of Joyce's death presumably stuck to director Carol Morley like a burr, since the filmmaker turned detective to painstakingly piece together her story for this melancholy and compassionate dramadocumentary, about the life behind the death that briefly symbolised our atomised society. Morley's got form in recreating missing lives, having hunted for her own forgotten teenage self in the memories of others for the tartly solipsistic The Alcohol Years (2000).

Here she uses the same methodology of small ads and lengthy interviews with friends and colleagues to better and more thoughtful effect, to excavate the memory of the truly vanished Joyce. Creating a dense, careful collage of interviews with tearful childhood friends, rueful

old boyfriends and borderline-catty flatmates, she uses their overlapping insights as the basis for wispy, impressionistic reconstructions of Joyce's experiences. Though blandly shot and repetitive in their content (shock, hazy reminiscence, regret registering anywhere from mild to self-lacerating), the interviews themselves are very telling. In front of a blurry, blown-up A-Z street map disconcertingly resembling mottled postmortem flesh, the interviewees mostly reveal themselves as unreliable narrators, their accounts coloured by lust (one engagingly rues not sleeping with her), blind admiration or fond detachment. Joyce emerges as the most unreliable narrator of all, a beautiful, bubbly but secretive girl intent on getting ahead, who slipped from one man and one social circle to another for two decades while revealing very little about herself along the way.

Morley even builds up her own wistful portrait of Joyce through the welter of dramatic reconstructions dotting the film. When they work, as in a drawn-out but poignant sequence in which failed singer Joyce croons 'My Smile Is Just a Frown Turned Upside Down' into a hairbrush to an imaginary audience, they add an inventive depth as well as a frisson. Filling in for hard evidence, as in a rather *Crimewatch* glimpse of rumoured domestic abuse, or overstretched interludes of the child Joyce performing for her family and

SYNOPSIS London, present day. Friends and colleagues reminisce about 38-year-old Joyce Vincent, whose body lay undisturbed for almost three years after she died alone of unknown causes in her bedsit. Obsessed with the case, director Carol Morley tracked down friends from various periods in Joyce's life, to find out about her.

We discover that after a childhood marred by the death of her mother and abandonment by her father, Joyce's beauty and bubbly manner allowed her to date a succession of increasingly successful men, and join their social circles. Drifting easily in and out of friendships and City jobs in the 1980s and 1990s, she was secretive, loved nightlife and dreamed of being a singer. Dramatised reconstructions are intercut between the interviews, recreating these memories of Joyce and speculating about her loneliness and health problems; there are also dramatised interludes suggested by Joyce's hints about her childhood. Joyce's friends suspect that an abusive relationship and a spell in a women's refuge led her to isolate herself. Her onetime boyfriend Martin admits she was the love of his life. Finally the film shows Joyce alone and possibly ill in her flat, on the last night of her life.

spying on her philandering father, they feel like pop-psychology padding rather than perceptive interludes. A trim wouldn't have gone amiss here. Still, the film is smart enough to signal that its version of Joyce is as fractured and partial as the others being paraded, nimbly changing a stripogram from policeman to vicar at a party, as voiceover memories contradict one another.

Imaginative but always respectful, the film's quiet tone and dogged investigations set it apart from similar but more theatrical drama-docs such as The Arbor (2010), which used an eye-catching combination of real-life soundtrack testimony and stylised dramatisations. Dreams of a Life handles Joyce's memory, and its interviewees, with care, avoiding prurient speculation about her lifestyle or her death, as it gradually lets her longtime friend and onetime boyfriend Martin confess his wretchedness at losing her. Less deft with the wider questions of alienation. and social breakdown, the film overeggs its case here in heavyhanded sequences of Joyce's cobwebbed flat being cleared, or local journalists pointing up the irony of crowds milling in the shopping centre beneath her flat while TV chatter flowed over her corpse for years as it melted into the carpet.

As the picture of Joyce's later life fades to snippets of gossip and conjecture about her slide into isolation and poverty, she eludes even Morley's close scrutiny, despite the convincing interplay of stoicism and aching loneliness that Zawe Ashton brings to her portrayal. The film's final scenes have a haunting ambivalence – is Joyce preparing for relaxation or eternal rest? – as she sinks into the death that will bring her the fame life denied her.

Kates Stables

CREDITS

Produced by Cairo Cannon James Mitchell

Directors of Photography Mary Farbrother Lynda Hall Film Editor Chris Wyatt

Production Designe Chris Richmond Music Barry Adamson Supervising Sound

Editor Christopher Wilson Costume Designer Leonie Prendergast

©Channel Four Television/The British Film Institute

Production Companies

Film4 and UK Film Council present in association with Shoot for the Moon with the participation of Bórd Scannán Na Héireann/Irish Film Board a Cannon and Morley production with Soho Moon Pictures A film by Carol Morley Produced with the support of investment incentives for the Irish Film Industry provided by the Government of Ireland Produced with the support of Channel 4

Developed with the assistance of Warp X Low-Budget Feature Film Scheme by UK Film Council, Film4, EM Media and Screen Yorkshire Made with the support of the UK Film Council's Film Fund, the UK Film Council's Slate Development Fund Developed with the seriotspace of Film4

assistance of Film4
Executive Producers
Katherine Butler
Tabitha Jackson
Alan Maher
Paul McGowan
André Singer

CAST
Zawe Ashton
Joyce Vincent
Alix Luka-Cain
young Joyce
Neelam Bakshi
mother
Cornell S. John

In Colour [1.78:1]

Distributor Dogwoof Pictures

Ghett'a Life

Jamaica 2011 Director: Chris Browne Certificate 15 103m 48s

Jamaican writer-director Chris Browne scored a *Phantom Menace*-beating local hit in 1999 with his feature debut *Third World Cop*, a scrappily disarming *Dirty Harry* rip-off whose familiar maverick-cop scenario played second fiddle to its arrestingly unfamiliar shantytown setting. The ramshackle state of the local film industry can be gauged by the fact that his sophomore effort not only took a dozen years to emerge but is apparently the first feature made with entirely Jamaican resources. Still, the layoff hasn't cramped Browne's style.

On the debit side, the central scenario is even more moth-eaten than *Third World Cop's*, dovetailing the two hoariest boxing-movie tropes (an underdog tries to punch his way out of the ghetto, whereupon the forces of corruption demand that he throw an important fight) against an equally hackneyed gangsta saga. Few will have difficulty anticipating each twist, and the eventual outcome is signposted from the moment that young Derrick is tipped as a possible Jamaican champion by his starry-eyed trainer.

However, as before, the film's propulsive energy largely compensates. The second half scarcely lets up for an instant, piling chase upon shootout upon boxing bout with terrific brio, enlivened by a pulsing reggae soundtrack and dialogue so uncompromising in its flavoursome patois that the film's UK distributor has eschewed the usual Jamaican-film practice of subtitling selected lines in favour of translating the whole thing up to the concluding title 'It Dun'.

Ghett'a Life's major strength is its setting in inner-city Kingston, on the border between a couple of 'garrison' communities which are unofficially ruled by thugs allied to the dominant political party, their support vital for anyone seeking elected office. (This remains a hot-button issue in Jamaican politics: as of November 2011, the subject is being debated between Prime Minister Andrew Holness and opposition leader Portia Simpson-Miller, both of whose constituencies are informally regarded as garrisons.) When Lenford, a long-term community organiser with the scars to prove it, decides to run for councillor he has to turn a blind eye to anything that local 'don' Sin gets up to, since it's ostensibly on his behalf. Even though Lenford's son Derrick has no time for 'politricks', the mere fact that he's talent-spotted by a boxing gym on 'the other side' makes him a de facto activist – a problem the cheekily namechecked Rocky Balboa never had to contend with.

But the narrative predictability diverts attention on to more intriguing sociological aspects. Heavily armed soldiers regularly trundle past, their seeming irrelevance suggesting that they're happy to let mobs such as Sin's keep order by acting as private militias. Political fundraising is conducted



Gangstas of the Caribbean: Kevoy Burton

through channels of varying legitimacy: Sin stages a boxing match in order to grab a share of the gate proceeds while simultaneously betting on the likely loser, rigging the match after securing more lucrative odds. Derrick's *Rocky*-style training montage is conceptually clichéd but it also efficiently sketches his home environment as he runs past corrugated-iron shacks and people carrying buckets of water from the gully that doubles as an inter-garrison border.

Cinematographer Bobby Bukowski and production designer Simone Clarke offset the darkness at the film's heart by drenching everything with garish primary colours. Newcomer Kevoy Burton is appealing enough as Derrick, though the most charismatic performer is Chris McFarlane as Sin, whose livid facial scar marks him as an irredeemable villain from the off. For all its shortcomings, Ghett'a Life is robustly watchable, even if it ultimately suggests that Jamaican cinema has evolved little since Browne's uncle Perry Henzell also blended local politics and fast-paced action in his groundbreaking The Harder They Come nearly 40 years ago.

CREDITS

Produced by Chris Browne Written by Chris Browne Director of Photography Bobby Bukowsk

Editor
Joel Burke
Production Designer
Simone Clarke
Music
Jon Williams
Sound Mixers

David Lazarus Rupert Bent **Costume Designer** Michelle Havnes

©[no company given]
Production Company
Jamrock Films
Executive Producers
Tony Hart
Maurice Facey

CAST Kevoy Burton Derrick Carl Davis
Lenford
Chris McFarlane
Don Sin
Winston Bell
Manuel
O'Daine Clarke
Big Toe
Karen Robinson
Dawn
Gully Rat
Lisa Williams
Candy Price

Lenford Salmon MP Hewlett Etana Annette Christopher Hutchinson Tek It

In Colour [1.85:1] Subtitles

Distributor Jinga Films/Miracle

9,342 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Kingston, Jamaica, the present. During an election campaign, two neighbouring but politically opposed 'garrison' communities are ruled by armed gangs. One of the gang leaders is Sin, enforcer for the party that Lenford Thompson seeks to represent as councillor. Lenford's son Derrick kicks a football across the border into a nearby boxing gym. Crossing the party divide to retrieve it, he is confronted by an old enemy, Gully Rat. Derrick's boxing prowess is admired by trainer Manuel, who invites him to join the gym. The other trainees initially refuse to spar with him but change their minds after he rescues one of them from drowning. Derrick falls for Manuel's granddaughter Camella. After Derrick's victory in the National Amateur Boxing Championships, he is kidnapped by Sin. Lenford negotiates his release, and lectures Derrick on the political ramifications of what he's doing. Derrick threatens to leave home; his mother Dawn agrees to cover for him while he continues training. Sin finds out, but decides that Derrick can make him money: he places huge bets on Derrick's opponents and attempts to rig his fights, first by corrupting the judges of a local bout and then – after putting Dawn in hospital and revealing that he murdered Derrick's brother Radcliff – by ordering Derrick to throw an international title fight. Derrick is about to throw the fight when he sees Lenford holding hard evidence of Sin's activities. After Derrick's victory, Gully Rat shoots Sin dead. Radcliff's girlfriend introduces Lenford and Dawn to their grandson. Derrick and Camella contemplate a future together.

How to Stop Being a Loser

United Kingdom 2011 Director: Dominic Burns

Low-budget horror director Dominic Burns and his three debut scriptwriters have achieved something remarkable with his first comedy feature How to Stop Being a Loser. it's a film that barely works on any level. The flashed-up text in the opening credits sequence introducing twentysomething protagonist James (Simon Phillips) as 'Misfit-Geek-Nerd-Dickhead-Twat-Loser' inadvertently nails the problem. James's best friend Ian (a flash cameo by Richard E. Grant), we learn, has just committed suicide because he hadn't been with a woman since he was 18: James fears he too will become a 'dateless wanderer' and so seeks the help of womaniser Ampersand (a hyperactive Craig Conway) to teach him how to chat up women.

Loser is essentially a lads' film that doesn't take itself too seriously. Still, there's some suggestion that Burns and co may be attempting a critique of phallocentric thinking, particularly through the over-the-top character of Ampersand, but it's a case of having your cake and eating it; James's eagerness and unquestioning acceptance of Ampersand, together with the gratuitous female flesh liberally plastered all over the place, betray the probable intent.

Loser is most clearly under the influence of recent successful cult British TV shows - the awkwardness and eccentricity of Peep Show, the choppy, comic-book visual style of Spaced. There's also a nod to the latter's trademark satirising of instantly recognisable film scenes - in this case (unsurprisingly) Tom Cruise's 'tame the cunt' speech in Magnolia and Robert De Niro's mirror monologue in Taxi Driver are shoehorned into the narrative. But Loser lacks the subtlety of those groundbreaking TV series, and its parodies of classic film scenes are toothless and simply not funny. In essence Loser is little more than an accumulation of mistimed misogynist gags within a largely predictable, cliché-



Benchwarmers: Richard E. Grant

ridden script; a collection of private jokes no doubt hilarious at the time, but which fall excruciatingly flat on retelling. ••• Mar Diestro-Dópido

CREDITS

Produced by
Billy Murray
Jonathan Sothcott
Simon Phillips
Dominic Burns
Patricia Rybarzcyk

Written by Chris Grezo Rupert Knowles With additional material by Alexander Williams

Director of Photography Alessio Valori Edited by Richard Colton Art Director Luis San Martyr Music

Matthew Williams
Production Sound
Mixer
Jake Whitelee

Jake Whitelee

Costume Designer
Natalie Egleton

@[no company given]
Production
Companies
Black and Blue Films,
Templeheart
Executive Producers
Richard Jones

Adam Smithe Lyndon Baldock CAST

CAST
Simon Phillips
James
Craig Conway
Ampersand
Genman Attkinson
Hannah
Stephanie Leonidas
Patch
Chris Grezo
Tom
Martin Compston
Adam
Dominic Burns
Nell
Jamie Longthorne
Guy
Colin Salmon
Denniis
Adele Silva
Charlotte
Martin Kemp
Zeus
Billy Murray

In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Crabtree Films Limited

Dr Learner Richard E. Grant

The Human Centipede II (Full Sequence)

The Netherlands 2011 Director: Tom Six Certificate 18 84m 19s

Tom Six's The Human Centipede has the sort of catchily gross premise usually found only in Japanese films based on Edogawa Rampo tales, but it is - once it gets past the sewn-mouth-to-anus business - a conventional mad-scientist movie. This thematic sequel (second in a projected trilogy) is an addition to the cycle of psycho-horror movies that enter the minds of obsessed madmen who act out private rituals (cf. Peeping Tom, Taxi Driver, The Driller Killer, Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer, Tony Manero) and can be construed as a cruel cartoon of the infantile excesses of a horror director. Protagonist Martin (Laurence R. Harvey, as extraordinary a presence as Dieter Laser was first time round) looks like a big, shambling, sweaty baby or a Steve Pemberton character from Psychoville but also bears a resemblance to Alfred Hitchcock. Like Hitchcock, he fixes on an image that requires the humiliation of better-looking performers and sets out to make it real.

Shot in black and white, it's a deliberately minimal film. Though supposedly capable of speech, Martin says not one coherent word in the film (making him even more dissociative than Ralph Fiennes in 2002's Spider). His childish assumptions are all borne out by the plot: in his mind, a blow to the head with a crowbar is an infallible anaesthetic, complex surgery can be performed by a self-taught amateur with household tools and masking tape, and no one misses obnoxious missing persons enough to look for

them. It's much better paced than the first film, which floundered once its creation was assembled. This spends an hour literally putting the pieces together and its entire third act on Martin's interaction with his monster. Like Baron Frankenstein, Dr Moreau and most other mad scientists, he is brought low when his own creation turns on him – though some of the nastier parts of the climax have been removed from the UK version at the insistence of the BBFC, which delayed the film's release. The Human Centipede was about the victims, but this makes the segments nasty caricatures we don't much care for: Lee Harris is the most odious, a brutal neighbour who plays his music too loud, while Ashlynn Yennie, who appeared in the original film, gamely plays herself as a superficial dimwit. Instead, the focus is on mad Martin's methodical, sometimes comic, sometimes sickening progress (or a mixture of both, as when he masturbates using sandpaper instead of tissue paper) towards the apotheosis of ringmastering his centipede as waste matter passes through the long digestive tract and he makes childish mouth-farting noises in delight.

In the end, after something of an ellipsis thanks to censor cuts, Martin is back where we first met him -watching the end credits of The Human Centipede in the car park where he works nights. Did he survive the real centipede inserted into his own colon and escape the police, or was this - even the failure of the project and the punishment visited upon him for it – all his sad fantasy? The Human Centipede II uses so many distancing effects – black-andwhite cinematography, a plot that ignores too many questions to be taken as objective reality, cartoonishly awful supporting characters (like something out of a British lad-mag take on early John Waters) - that its horrors are sickfunny rather than gruelling-unpleasant. There are iffy elements – the depiction



Creepy crawly: Laurence R. Harvey

SYNOPSIS London, the present. Twentysomething James visits a psychiatrist, Dr Leaner.

We learn that James's best friend Ian jumped in front of a train after failing to chat up a woman. Fearful of becoming like Ian, James starts searching online for help with attracting women. He joins a pick-up school, run by a womaniser called Ampersand. After some training and an image change, James bumps into long-term crush Hannah at a party and manages to get her number. On their first date James uses one of Ampersand's chat-up lines, but Hannah recognises it and leaves disappointed. James apologises, and they start dating. Hannah moves in with James. James's obsession with Hannah makes him neglect his old friends Tom and Patch. When Patch drops by to pick up DVDs, she notices that Hannah has thrown away a photograph of James and Ian together. She recovers it from the rubbish, but Hannah takes the credit for doing so.

Hannah's father gets James a job as a graphic designer in Montreal, so they decide to move there. Patch realises that Hannah lied to James about the picture and runs to the airport to tell him. When Hannah tells James that the job is in fact in accounts, James decides to stay in the UK. James and his friends write a successful book on how to stop being a loser.

James finishes telling his story to 'Dr Leaner'; at this point the real doctor comes in – it transpires that the former is in fact a patient. James asks Patch out.

of a person with learning difficulties as a malicious monster and the abuse of a pregnant woman, in particular — and it was never going to win good citizenship awards, but it's not an all-out atrocity (among the missing scenes is a moment of infant abuse that invited comparison with *A Serbian Film*). A significant improvement over part one, this genuinely builds on — and critiques — the vision of the first film.

Kim Newman

CREDITS

Produced by
Ilona Six
Tom Six
Written by
Tom Six
Written of
Photography
David Meadows
Edited by
Nigel de Hond
Production Design
Thomas Stefan

Original Music Composed by James Edward Barke Sound Recordist Henry Milliner

©Six Entertainment **Production Company** A Six Entertainment production **Executive Producer**

Film Extracts
The Human Centipede
(First Sequence)
(2009)

CAST

Laurence R. Harvey Martin Ashlynn Yennie Miss Yennie, human centipede 1 Maddi Black

Candy, human centipede 2 Kandace Caine

Karrie, human centipede 3 **Dominic Borrelli** Paul, human centipede

4
Lucas Hansen
lan, human centipede 5
Lee Harris
Dick, human centipede

Dan Burman Greg, human centipede

Daniel Jude Gennis
Tim, human centipede 8
Georgia Goodrick
Valerie, human
centipede 9
Emma Lock
Kim, human centipede
10
Katherine Templar

Rachel
In Black and White
[1.78:1]

Distributor

7,588 ft +8 frames (after cuts of 2m 37s)

SYNOPSIS London, the present. Martin, a disturbed obsessive, lives with his mother and works nights in an underground car park. He is obsessed with the film The Human Centipede and dreams of exceeding the achievements of its mad scientist by creating his own human centipede. He picks on stray people who come into the car park, battering them with a crowbar and storing them in a warehouse he has rented When his mother rips up his Human Centipede scrapbook, Martin kills her. He contacts Ashlynn Yennie, one of the stars of The Human Centipede, lures her to London with the promise of an audition for a Tarantino film and bludgeons her too. He sews 12 people into a human centipede and is triumphant at this achievement, but they rebel. Yennie, head of the centipede, avenges herself on her tormentor, and he stabs her. However, some time later, Martin - having perhaps imagined his human centipede - is still in his booth at the car park, watching the film.

Immortals

USA 2011

Director: Tarsem Singh Dhandwar Certificate 15 110m 27s

"None of the mortals here should witness us in our immortal form." So says Zeus (Luke Evans), his beauty, youth and lustre contrasting with his earlier, greyer disguise as an old man (John Hurt). Nevertheless, we mortal viewers do witness Zeus in both his licit and illicit forms, generating an aesthetic paradox beloved of the ancients themselves.

Certainly Immortals is preoccupied with questions of identity and representation. Its events are realised through dynamic action, state-of-the-art CGI and eye-popping (retrofitted) 3D, but are also reflected and refracted within the film through the more conventionally classical visual media of painted panels, reliefs and statues one of which, when touched in the final sequence by a boy with visionary powers, is transformed before his (and our) eyes into a mobile spectacle of airborne war between the Gods and the Titans. Here there is more than one way to tell a story. As righteous hero Theseus (Henry Cavill) and brutal villain Hyperion (Mickey Rourke) clash in the film's climax, the former declares, "My deeds will go down in history" - to which the latter replies, "I'm writing your history." Evidently at stake in this conflict is not just the fate of the gods and humanity, but also how, and by whom, it is expressed.

The ultimate storytellers and imagecrafters are a pantheon of filmmakers led by Tarsem Singh (The Cell, The Fall) who, Zeus-like, appears in the closing credits under two different guises, as both Tarsem Singh Dhandwar and plain old Tarsem. Following a practice already well established among ancient artists, Tarsem and writers/brothers Vlas and Charley Parlapanides use mythic names as relatively fixed coordinates in their otherwise flexible narrative form. Hyperion is not the Titan of tradition but a scarred human king (with an impressively grotesque collection of masks) hellbent on ending the gods' reign and the Greeks' bloodline. Theseus dies before he can ever reach Athens and become its legendary king. Phaedra (Freida Pinto) is Theseus's first and only lover, bearing him his only child, rather than a second wife doomed to fall in love with her stepson Hippolytus - and she is a Sibylline (or 'Sybelline', as the film spells it) oracle to boot. Some of these changes to conventional myth involve Euhemeristic rationalisations (eg the monstrous hybrid Minotaur is here just a well-built executioner in a bull-head mask). Immortals, however, like Clash of the Titans (1981, 2010) but unlike Troy (2004), does not shy away from depicting confrontations between humans and the divine -and, in its most iconoclastic myth-busting moments, even portrays the deaths of gods themselves.

The result is a postmodern epic action-adventure both familiar and



Salvation army: 'The Immortals'

novel. Theseus's rites of passage may expressly unfold in the 13th century BC, but their alien (and extraordinarily beautiful) settings belong less to history or traditional myth than to a febrile imagination. The city siege may evoke Troy, the long-take slow-motion fighting may recall 300 (with which Immortals shares producers), and some enslaved priestesses may borrow a trick from Spartacus to conceal their mistress's identity – but the colours and lighting have been inspired by the paintings of Caravaggio,

Theseus himself seems to be an ass-kicking Christ figure (complete with his own cross to bear, grapplings over faith, and an act of self-sacrifice), while the film's thematic concerns with a fanatical war, dangerous POWs (detained in a Guantanamo-like hellhole) and even a reduced and beleaguered Greece could have been lifted from today's headlines. For in Tarsem's Theseid, the gods may die but stories and struggles remain immortal –however much their forms may change. •• Anton Bitel

CREDITS

Produced by Gianni Nunnari Mark Canton Rvan Kavanaugh

Written by Charles Parlapanides Vlas Parlapanides

Director of
Photography
Brendan Galvin
Editors
Stuart Levy

Wyatt Jones David Rosenbloom **Production Designer**

Tom Foden
Music by/Score
Produced &
Conducted by
Trevor Morris
Sound Designer
Leslie Shatz
Costume Designer
Eliko Ishioka
Visual Effects
Prime Focus Film VFX-

London, Mumbai,

Stunt Co-ordinators
USA:
Arthur Malesci
Canada:
Marc Désourdy

@War of the Gods, LLC
Production
Companies
A Universal Pictures and
Relativity Media
presentation in
association with Virgin
Produced
A Relativity Media
production
A Mark Canton. Gianni

Nunnari production A film by Tarsem

Tippett Studios

Scanline VFX

Image Engine

Entertainment

Christov Effects and

Rodeo FX

BarXseven

Fake Digital

Design, Inc.

Modus

Executive Producers Tucker Tooley

Jeff Waxman Tommy Turtle Jason Felts

CAST

Henry Cavill
Theseus
Stephen Dorff
Stavros
Luke Evans
Zeus
Isabel Lucas
Athena
Kellan Lutz
Poseidon
Joseph Morgan
Lysander
Freida Pinto
Phaedra
Daniel Sharman
Aries
John Hurt

Mickey Rourke

Anne Day Jones

Aethra

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour [1.85:1]

Some screenings

presented in 3D

Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

9,940 ft +8 frames (submitted length; some substitution cuts made for category)

SYNOPSIS Greece, 1228 BC. Requiring the divine Epirus Bow for his plans to unleash the Titans from their prison beneath Mount Tartarus and end the remote gods' reign, King Hyperion and his fanatical Heraklion army devastate Greece to find it. Reared by Zeus (in old man's guise), the peasant Theseus sees his mother murdered by Hyperion but, together with the oracle Phaedra and two others. escapes his Heraklion captors. Although Zeus forbids the other gods to intervene in Theseus's human choices, Poseidon furtively rescues the hero from a Heraklion attack at sea. Following Phaedra's vision, Theseus returns home to bury his mother in the ancestral Labyrinth, where he finds the Epirus Bow and defeats Hyperion's pursuing executioner. Phaedra sacrifices her virginity – and her prophetic powers – to Theseus. Heraklion soldiers ambush Theseus and steal the bow. When two gods save Theseus's life, Zeus punishes one with death. Theseus races to the remaining Greeks at the walled city beneath Tartarus, and rejects an offer to join Hyperion. As Hyperion uses the bow to destroy the city gate and release the Titans, Theseus leads the Greeks against the invading Heraklion army. While the gods descend to fight the Titans, Theseus kills Hyperion. Sole surviving god Zeus brings Tartarus down on to the Titans and the Heraklion army, and raises Theseus's body up to Olympus. Several years later, Acamas, Theseus's son by Phaedra, looks at statues of his father's exploits. As Zeus (in old man's guise) assures him that Theseus continues fighting evil in the heavens, Acamas has a vision of celestial war between the Gods and the Titans.

In Time

USA 2011

Director: Andrew Niccol Certificate 12A 109m 7s

"The poor die, and the rich don't live." In Time is a dystopian vision of the class system in America. In this future US, advances in genetic technology mean that no one ages past 25 – but after their 25th birthday people are given only a year to live; any more time must be earned or taken from someone else.

If this sounds like a familiar sciencefiction scenario - Logan's Run (1976), in which no one lives past 30, is the most obvious precursor – it's given a sharp contemporary relevance by the sense of precariousness that hangs over the film. This is a dystopia based around the concept of what some social theorists have called precarity: the existential state arising from short-term, casual work. Logan's Run was governed by a feeling of fatalism, the mandatory executions mystified by religious ritual; In Time is simultaneously more economistically brutal and more hopeful – death can be deferred, so long as one keeps earning. But hope is the problem: for the poor, hope – the belief of each individual that *they* will attain immortality – is what keeps them buying into the system. While the rich have so much time that they don't even have to think about it, the poor are constantly hustling, unable ever to relax or settle. When Justin Timberlake's factory worker Will Salas escapes from the ghetto into the wealthy compound of New Greenwich, he's told by a waitress that it's clear he doesn't belong because he does everything too quickly. In this future, it's time, not money, that's conspicuously consumed. Salas has made it into New Greenwich because he's been given a century by a super-rich nihilist who's grown tired of living and of the grossly inegalitarian system from which he's profited. In New Greenwich, Salas meets the alluring Sylvia, daughter of 'time banker' Philippe Weis.

There is something anachronistic about Niccol's film: genetics might have advanced in his version of 2161 yet there's very little visible new technology differentiating this world from ours. But this is a strength: the estrangement we feel in the film's world is almost entirely cognitive it doesn't depend on the tired and superficial signifiers of CGI. For this, evidently, is a work of satire more than it is an attempt at futurology. It is no doubt a comment on the standard Hollywood movie that there seems nothing out of the ordinary about a film entirely populated by actors who must pass for no older than 25.

Yet the satire on Hollywood is ultimately less interesting than what In Time has to say about work and class. It is Sylvia, locked into the sterile opulence of New Greenwich, its endless balls and parties like something from Last Year in Marienbad, who makes the observation about the poor dying and the rich not living - the wealthy can't



Fast times: Justin Timberlake, Amanda Seyfried

escape any more than the poor can. So Sylvia becomes a Patty Hearst-like figure fighting alongside Salas to destroy the class structure itself. It's a revolutionary film for our new revolutionary times; it's telling

CREDITS

Produced by

Andrew Niccol Eric Newman Marc Abraham Written by Andrew Niccol Director of

Photography Edited by

Zach Staenberg
Production Designer Alex McDowe Music

Craig Armstrong Production Sound Mixer Ed Novick

Costume Designer Colleen Atwood Visual Effects Soho VFX Luma Pictures

Stunt Co-ordinator David M. Leitch

©Regency Entertainment (USA), Inc. (in the US only) @Monarchy Enterprises S.Á.R.L. (in all other territories)
Production

Companies Regency Enterprises presents a New Regency/Strike Entertainment production A film by Andrew Niccol

Executive Producers Arnon Milchan Hutch Parker Bob Harper Andrew Z. Davis

Kristel Laiblin

Amy Israel

sequences involving, because ultimately it's the concepts rather than the overly distended action that are the most memorable things about In Time. • Mark Fisher

that Niccol can't make the many chase

CAST

Amanda Seyfried Justin Timberlake Cillian Murphy Raymond Le Vincent Kartheise

Olivia Wilde Matt Bomer Henry Hamilton Johnny Galecki

Collins Pennie Timekeeper Jaege Toby Hemingway Timekeeper Kors Brendan Miller

Yaya DaCosta

Alex Pettyfer

Dolby Digital/Datasat Digital Sound Colour/Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1]

Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)

9,820 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS The US, 2161. People stop ageing at 25 – and are then given only one more year to live. In order to live past 26, they must earn more time. Social classes are organised according to how much time people have: the poor live in the ghetto of Dayton and the rich in New Greenwich.

One night Will Salas, a Dayton factory worker, meets Henry Hamilton, who has already lived for a hundred years and still has over a century left. Salas saves Hamilton from the Minutemen, a gang who drain people's time. Tired and jaded, Hamilton gives most of his remaining time to Salas before killing himself.

Salas plans to take a trip to New Greenwich with his mother – but she finds herself stranded, without enough time to pay for a bus ride home, and dies before she can meet him. In New Greenwich, Salas meets the wealthy Phillipe Weis and his daughter Sylvia. Salas is pursued by the police force, the Timekeepers, who suspect that he stole Hamilton's time. The Timekeepers confiscate most of Salas's time. Salas abducts Sylvia, offering her return for a ransom. Weis doesn't pay, and Sylvia and Salas team up and start robbing time banks. Their efforts to redistribute time into the ghetto are futile, however, since the rich simply increase the cost of living. Sylvia helps Salas steal a million years from her father. With this influx of time into Dayton, the class system comes under threat, and the poor surge into richer time zones. Salas and Sylvia pledge to continue robbing time banks.

Justice

USA 2011

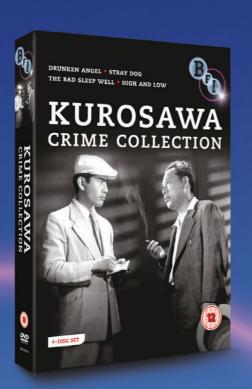
Director: Roger Donaldson Certificate 15 104m 44s

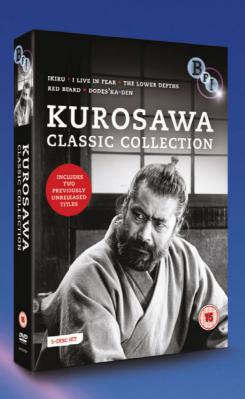
Vigilante movies, which had their heyday in the Death Wish 70s, have been in abeyance recently, despite the fact that vigilantism is enjoying a sophisticated resurrection in TV shows as various as the darkly playful Dexter and sombre surveillance series Person of Interest. Justice, a rapidly paced and efficient thriller about a teacher thrown into a vigilante ring when he's offered vengeance for his wife's rape, brings little new to the party, however. It merely dusts off that subgenre in which the reluctant recruit suffers a crisis of conscience, best remembered from legal thriller The Star Chamber (1983). Set in a New Orleans where Hurricane Katrina's effects are still visible, the film fails to capitalise on current cultural anxieties about the authorities' inability to protect us, preferring to paint its vigilante villain in broad strokes as a power-crazed psychotic who reduces Edmund Burke's maxim 'It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do; but what humanity, reason and justice tell me I ought to' into the inadvertently hilarious code phrase 'The hungry rabbit jumps'.

As Guy Pearce's smooth cell-leader Simon pitches revenge to the dazed Will (Nicolas Cage), he's selling murder as slickly as solar panels - there's no fevered conviction, nor Strangers on a Train narrative elegance about the deal. Paranoia teems through the story, directed not at criminality but at vigilantism, which is portrayed as a creeping form of domestic terrorism infecting normal-seeming cops and neighbours alike. Espousal of nonviolence is the film's only passing novel feature, but it still manages to make pacifism look morally correct yet ineffective. Will's wife Laura (a stiff-faced January Jones) may stop him pummelling Simon to death in the film's showdown, but it's her handgun not her scruples that drops him at the end.

Director Roger Donaldson, a wellpractised hand at superior multiplex fare like *The Bank Job* (2007) opts to power through the predictable catand-mouse narrative using muscular, tightly knit action sequences. Robert Tannen's functional script gives him little wiggle room, offering a by-thenumbers story structure that aims for dark David Fincher-style jeopardy but only achieves a generalised tension. Justice is what's politely described as straightforward, its plot short on surprises - even its supposedly shock ending is a webof-corruption reveal familiar to anyone who's ever seen a 1970s paranoia-thriller.

Cage, who's in earnest mode here rather than his scenery-chewing one, brings an endearing awkwardness to Will's predicament, bleating with fear for much of the movie. He's significantly less interesting once the ordeal has honed him into a



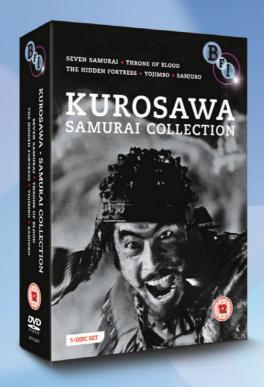


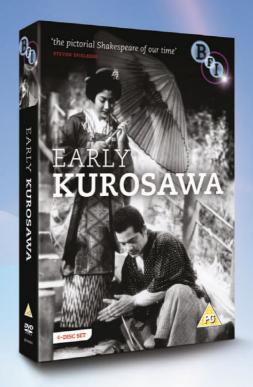


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Fılms

wary adversary, and his character's impermeable decency ducks the key question asked by any vigilante movie worth its salt - what has the hero become, and at what price?

Kate Stables

CREDITS

Produced by Tobey McGuire Ram Bergman James D. Stern Screenplay Robert Tannen

Story Robert Tanner Todd Hickey Director of

Photography Editor Jay Cassidy Production Designer ennis Washingtor

Music I Peter Robinson Re-recording Mixer Leslie Shat Costume Designer

Caroline Eselin-Schaeffer

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Endgame Company presents in association with the Aura Film Partnership and Fierce Entertainment an Endgame Entertainment and Material Pictures production

A Ram Bergman

production

A Roger Donaldson film Executive Producers Jenno Topping Christopher Petzel Julie Goldstein Douglas E. Hansen

CAST Nicolas Cage

Will Gerard January Jones Guy Pearce Harold Perrineau Jennifer Carpenter Trudy

Xander Berkeley Lieutenant Durga Irone Singleton Wayne Pere

Cancer Marcus Lyle Brown Detective Green Dikran Tulaine Joe Chrest Detective Rudeski Demetrius Bridges

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Momentum Pictures

9.425 ft +6 frames

SYNOPSIS New Orleans, present day. After his wife Laura is brutally raped, teacher Will accepts an offer from a secret vigilante cell to have her attacker killed. Required to kill a paedophile to return the favour, Will balks, but accepts when head vigilante Simon threatens to kill Laura. Despite trying to warn his target, the man dies accidentally, falling on to a freeway as they tussle. Will is arrested for his murder, learning that his target was in reality investigative journalist Alan Marsh. Released by Durgan, a cop working with the cell, Will discovers from Marsh's colleagues that Marsh was researching the cell's activities. Laura goes into hiding. Will's picture is in the newspaper as an escaped murder suspect. Will hunts down Marsh's research discs on the cell, hidden in his dry-docked boat. Photographs prove that Will's best friend Jimmy is also a cell member. Will offers to swap Marsh's discs for a phone video Simon has proving Will's innocence in Marsh's death But Jimmy has kidnapped Laura, so that Will must trade the discs for her. In a showdown at an abandoned mall, Jimmy changes sides but is killed by Simon. After Simon and Will struggle, Laura shoots Simon dead. Durgan appears, telling Will and Laura that he will make it look as if Simon and Jimmy shot one another. Will gives the discs to a journalist at Marsh's newspaper. He is horrified when his contact reveals with a coded phrase that he's a member of the vigilante group.

Machine Gun Preacher

USA 2011 **Director: Marc Forster** Certificate 15 129m 4s

Machine Gun Preacher's promotional poster has its rugged star and executive producer Gerard Butler sternly clutching an assault rifle and protecting a photogenic African child, while the tagline alongside states that "Hope is the greatest weapon of all." It's perhaps no surprise then that the film turns out to be an unwieldy blend of gung-ho heroics and evangelical fervour likely to earn the blessing of the Christian Republican Right.

On paper this should be a compelling story of an improbable real-life Good Samaritan: a self-styled "hillbilly from Pennsylvania", Sam Childers was a violent criminal who in the 1990s found God and devoted himself to aiding orphans in war-ravaged East Africa, However, director Marc Forster (whose diverse credits include Monster's Ball, Finding Neverland and Quantum of Solace) and debut screenwriter Jason Keller take a sentimental and uncritical approach to the gun-toting missionary, despite the fact that recent newspaper reports have questioned the veracity of his exploits against Joseph Kony's rebel faction, the Lord's Resistance Army.

The transformation from heroininjecting sinner to God's soldier is alarmingly swift; one minute Childers is robbing crack dens, the next he's seen the light and is engaged in a Third World humanitarian operation. Occasionally he entertains doubts about his actions, but fortunately an orphan is on hand to encourage him not to abandon his faith. Unlike Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire's Johnny Mad Dog (2008), the film shows little interest in the child soldiers Childers rescues. What's important here is the white man's personal redemption, as a tearyeyed Butler confesses that, "Helping you kids is about the only good thing that I've done in this life.

The narrative focus on Childers ensures that the talented supporting actors are short-changed in stock roles: there's Michael Shannon as the doomed best friend, Michelle Monaghan as the long-suffering wife back in Pennsylvania, and Goodbye Solo's Souleymane Sy Savane, whose dramatic function as a Sudanese soldier consists principally of providing the audience with a modicum of sociopolitical context.

Forster efficiently contrasts the claustrophobic American interiors with the wide-open spaces of African bushland. Yet the DV footage in the closing credits of Childers himself asking "Does it matter how I bring them [the children] home?" suggests that Machine Gun Preacher could have been much more rigorous in interrogating his extreme methods. A female middle-class doctor, who dares to question Childers's violent tactics, is later brutally punished for her naivety. It's the protagonist who comes to her rescue, in an act of gunsblazing heroism that wouldn't look out of place in Rambo.

Thomas Dawson

CREDITS

Produced by Robbie Brenner Gary Safady

Deborah Giarratana Craig Chapman Marc Forster Written by

Photography Fditor **Production Designer** Music Written and

Sound Design Costume Designer Stunt Co-ordinators

South African Adam Horton

Louise Rosner-Meve Brad Simpson Gerard Butler Michael Corso Kyle Dean Jackson Alan Siegel Adi Shankar

CAST Gerard Butler

Sam Childers Michelle Monaghan Michael Shannon Kathy Baker Souleymane Sy Savane Deng Madeline Carroll

Ryann Campos Fana Mokoena Percy Matsemela Mduduzi Mabaso Ronnie Nyakale

Dolby Digital/Datasat Digital Sound In Colour 2.35:1 [Hawk Anamorphic Lenses]

Distributor

11.616 ft +0 frames

Performed by Asche & Spence Greg Herzenach Thomas Scott Thad Spencer Richard Werbo Al Wolovitch

Dan Leimeux

©MGP Productions. Production

Companies Relativity presents in association with Virgin Produced a Safady Entertainment, Apparatus, GG Films production in association with 1984
P.D.C., Mpower Pictures, ITS Capital and Merlina Entertainment A film by Marc Forster **Executive Producers**

SYNOPSIS Pennsylvania, the 1990s. Biker Sam Childers is released from jail and resumes his life of drug abuse and violent crime with his best friend Donnie. Encouraged by his wife Lynn, a guilt-ridden Sam attends a local evangelical service, where he is baptised and becomes a born-again Christian. Turning his back on his hellraising past, Sam sets up a construction business and builds his family a new home. Hearing from a visiting pastor about the humanitarian crisis in Uganda, he decides to travel to Africa to assist in the relief effort. Escorted by Deng, a soldier

a militia group which forces captured children to become combatants. Returning to America, Sam erects a new church, then heads back to Sudan to build an orphanage. Assisted by Deng and his colleagues, the missionary heads into territory controlled by the LRA and rescues abducted youngsters. On trips home to visit Lynn and their daughter Paige, he is frustrated by his inability to raise sufficient funds for his humanitarian work. Following Donnie's death, Sam experiences profound doubts about his religious mission. In the Sudan, however, a traumatised boy urges him not to give in to the forces of hate. He resolves to carry on helping African orphans.

from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, he crosses the border into Sudan,

where he witnesses the atrocities carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA),

Mysteries of Lisbon

Portugal/France/Brazil 2010 Director: Raúl Ruiz Certificate PG 266m 25s

Mysteries of Lisbon is our Film of the Month and is reviewed on page 60

CREDITS

Produced by Paulo Branco Written by Carlos Saboga Based on the novel by Director of Photography André Szankowsk

Editors Valeria Sarmiento Carlos Madaleno Art Director Isabel Branco **Music** Jorge Arriagada Luis de Freitas Branco

Sound Ricardo Leal Miguel Martins

@Clan Filmes (PT) Companies film by Raúl Ruiz A Clap Filmes, Alfama Films Production, RTP Radio Televisão Portugal production With the participation of ICA - Instituto de Cinema e do

Audiovisual MC

Ministério da Cultura, Arte, CNC - Centre national de la cinématographie, Lisboa, Cofina Developpement With the support of the MEDIA Programme

CAST

Adriano Luz Father Dinis Maria João Bastos Ângela de Lima Ricardo Pereira Alberto de Magalhães Clotilde Hesme Elisa de Montfort Afonso Pimentel Pedro da Silva (adult) João Luís Arrias Pedro da Silva (child) Albano Jerónimo Count of Santa Bárbara João Baptista D. Pedro da Silva Martin Loizillon Sebastião de Melo Julien Alluguette Benoît de Montfort Rui Morisson Marquis of Montezelos Joana de Verona Eugénia Carlotta Cotta

SYNOPSIS Portugal, the nineteenth century. A young boy known only as João has been raised in the college run by priest Father Dinis; he knows nothing of his parentage. Ill in bed, Ioão is visited by a woman whom he learns is his mother: the former Angela de Lima, now married to the cruel Count of Santa Bárbara, who abuses her while having an affair with his servant Eugénia. Dinis gives Angela sanctuary in his college, and tells João the story of his late father, impoverished aristocrat Pedro da Silva. Pedro fell for Angela, daughter of the Marquis of Montezelos, but was killed by the Marquis's henchman Heliodoro (aka 'Knife-Eater'). Heliodoro was due to kill the baby expected by Angela, pregnant by Da Silva. But Dinis, disguised as a gypsy, paid Heliodoro to hand over the child none other than João, whose real name is also Pedro da Silva.

Years later, Alberto de Magalhães a mysterious Brazilian said to be a slave trader and pirate - appears in Lisbon society and causes a stir defending Angela's reputation. Dinis visits the dying Santa Bárbara who years ago had been warned off Angela by Dinis - in his wordly guise of Sebastião de Melo. After Santa Barbara's death, Angela enters a convent. Dinis confronts Magalhães none other than Heliodoro, who started a new life with the money Dinis paid him to save João.

Santa Barbara's confessor Friar



Under the bonnet: Maria João Bastos

D. Álvaro de Albuquerque **José Manuel Mendes** Friar Baltasar da Encarnação **Léa Seydoux** Blanche de Montfort

In Colour [1.85:1] Subtitles

Distributor New Wave Films

23,977 ft +8 frames

Portuguese/Brazilian theatrical title **Místerios de Lisboa**

Baltasar tells Dinis about his own former life as Alvaro, a dissolute aristocrat who began an affair with the Countess Silvina; she died in Venice, giving birth to a son, none other than Dinis. Magalhães, now married to Evzenie, is followed to Lisbon by a woman from his past, Elisa de Montfort. Dinis recounts how, as Sebastião de Melo, he grew up in the Montfort family; he and Elisa's father Benoit de Montfort both fell for Blanche de Clermont, later Elisa's mother. Conspiring against a rival, Benoît married Blanche, but the union was unhappy; Blanche gave birth to twins, Elisa and Arthur, then died in a fire.

Dinis intervenes in a confrontation between Elisa and Magalhães. Visiting her friend the Vicomte d'Armagnac, Elisa meets Pedro da Silva – the grown-up João. Pedro falls for Elisa, who tells him her life was ruined by Magalhães; Pedro decides to avenge her and her dead brother Arthur. Pedro fights a duel with Magalhães, but the latter breaks it off to tell Pedro he has known him from birth; Pedro attempts suicide.

Magalhães explains that he once paid Elisa a fortune to sleep with him; she fell in love with him, but he rebuffed her with tragic results. Pedro meets his grandfather the Marquis de Montezelos, now a blind beggar. Pedro leaves Europe for the tropics; ill in bed, he dictates his memoirs. Years earlier, Dinis finds the young João seemingly on the verge of death.

My Week with Marilyn

USA/United Kingdom 2011 Director: Simon Curtis

"Shall I be her?" Marilyn Monroe (Michelle Williams) whispers to her companion, Colin Clark, as they descend a staircase in Windsor Castle to find a gaggle of excited servants assembled in the hall. And without pause she goes into the practised repertoire of pouts, giggles and wiggles that spells out the public persona of 'Marilyn', eliciting the expected shrieks of delight from her audience. Central to the achievement of Williams's performance is her skill in bringing out the ambiguities in Monroe's own attitude to her image: the way she at once loathed 'Marilyn' for the way it straitjacketed her yet also revelled in the near-Pavlovian response it could arouse in her public. The same, at times, even goes for her moments of distress; every so often Williams gives us the flash of calculation behind the pathos. as she checks out the effect she's having. "Believe me," her business partner Milton Greene (Dominic Cooper) warns the infatuated Colin, "pity's the last thing she needs."

True, Williams lacks Monroe's voluptuous curves but that soon ceases to matter. Her performance goes way beyond mere mimicry of voice and gesture – though she gets those right too, and even does all her own singing into psychological re-creation. The problem this creates for Simon Curtis's debut film – based on Clark's 2000 memoir of the same title, in which he recalls how he (allegedly) provided the troubled star with emotional and moral support during the fraught shoot of The Prince and the Showgirl – is that virtually everybody else in the cast is reduced to cameos and caricatures. As Clark, Eddie Redmayne gives a one-note performance of puppyish adoration, while Kenneth Branagh's exasperated barks as Laurence Olivier all too often recall Peter Sellers's comedy-LP recitation of Lennon-McCartney's 'A Hard Day's Night'. Even so, Branagh does walk off with some of the funniest lines; teaching Monroe to act, he growls, "is like teaching Urdu to a badger"

Elsewhere, a gallery of distinguished British thesps pop up for a minute or two apiece: Michael Kitchen, Derek Jacobi, Julia Ormond (as Vivien Leigh), Toby Jones, Simon Russell Beale, Emma Watson, Dougray Scott (rather uncomfortable as Arthur Miller), mostly vanished almost as soon as glimpsed. Judi Dench as Sybil Thorndike and Zoë Wanamaker as Monroe's egregious Method coach Paula Strasberg initially get the chance to make a little more impact but are soon sidelined in favour of the central platonic romance. The dialogue rarely neglects to spell out the obvious: Olivier, Clark explains to Marilyn, "is a great actor who wants to be a movie star; you're a movie star who wants to be a great actress" (just in case we hadn't worked this out 70 minutes into the film).



The seven day itch: Michelle Williams, Dougray Scott

Altogether, My Week with Marilyn is a slight, fluffy comedy with pretensions rather beyond its emotional reach, but it may well serve to win Michelle Williams the Oscar she missed out on for Brokeback Mountain and Blue Valentine. Philip Kemp

CREDITS

Produced by David Parfitt Harvey Weinstein Screenplay

Screenplay Adrian Hodges Based on the diaries by Colin Clark Director of

Photography
Ben Smithard
Editor
Adam Recht
Production Designer
Donal Woods
Marilyn's Theme by
Alexandre Desplat
Score Composed and

Conducted by Conrad Pope Production Sound Mixer Richard Dyer Costume Designer
Jill Taylor

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Films present in
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Productions a
Trademark Films
production
Made with the support
of the UK Film Council's
Development Fund
Developed with the
assistance of BBC Films

Executive Producers
Jamie Laurenson
Simon Curtis
Ivan Mactaggart
Christine Langan

Bob Weinstein Kelly Carmichael Film Extracts The Prince and the Showgirl (1957)

CAST

Michelle Williams
Marilyn Monroe
Kenneth Branagh
Sir Laurence Olivier
Eddie Redmayne
Colin Clark
Dominic Cooper
Mitton Greene
Philip Jackson
Roger Smith
Derek Jacobi
Sir Owen Morshead
Toby Jones
Arthur Jacobs
Michael Kitchen
Hugh Perceval
Julia Ormond
Vivien Leigh
Simon Russell Beale

Cotes-Preedy
Dougray Scott
Arthur Miller
Zoë Wanamaker
Paula Strasberg
Emma Watson

Judi Dench Dame Sybil Thorndike Jim Carter Barry Richard Clifford

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

SYNOPSIS London, 1956. Twenty-three-year-old Colin Clark, younger son of Sir Kenneth Clark, talks himself into a job with Laurence Olivier's production company and becomes third assistant director on Olivier's forthcoming production The Prince and the Showgirl. Olivier's co-star Marilyn Monroe arrives with her new husband, playwright Arthur Miller. Roger Smith, a hardbitten excop, is appointed her bodyguard. Olivier receives Marilyn graciously at Pinewood Studios, but soon becomes exasperated with her crippling nervousness, erratic time-keeping and inability to remember her lines, though Sybil Thorndike, playing Olivier's mother, tries to be supportive. Colin asks wardrobe assistant Lucy out on a date, but finds himself increasingly drawn to the troubled Marilyn.

Olivier, infuriated by the interference of Marilyn's acting coach Paula Strasberg, becomes increasingly harsh towards his co-star. Miserable and insecure, Marilyn responds to Colin's sympathy. One night Colin overhears a furious row between Miller and Marilyn, who has read unflattering remarks about her in his notebook. Soon afterwards Miller leaves for New York to see his children. Marilyn's reliance on Colin's emotional support arouses the suspicions of her business partner Milton Greene, who forbids Colin to see her.

With Roger's help, Marilyn whisks Colin off for a day out. They visit Windsor Castle and Eton and go skinny-dipping together. Over the next week Colin spends several chaste nights with Marilyn, and with his encouragement her on-set performance improves. With Miller about to return from the US, Marilyn tells Colin that their time together must end. The film wraps, to everyone's relief if not their satisfaction. Colin asks Lucy out again, but she turns him down. Marilyn comes to say goodbye to Colin before flying back to America.

Paranormal Activity 3

USA 2011 Directors: Henry Joost, Ariel Schulman Certificate 15 84m 0s

With the Saw franchise in abeyance, failing to deliver a sequel for the first time in seven years, it seems the Paranormal Activity series - which debuted with a sleeper success in 2009, taking the edge off the box office for *Saw VI* – will step into the breach. Making a canny choice, the producers including series creator Oren Peli – draft in Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman, previously known for the unsettling social-network documentary Catfish, to direct, though the script is by Christopher B. Landon, who began filling in the backstory for Peli's haunted heroine with last year's Paranormal Activity 2.

The finale, which leaves the poltergeist-plagued home of sisters Katie and Kristi for Grandma's house, has echoes of the creepiest sequence in Catfish, as the camera prowls around what seem to be deserted stables and comes across a coven of witches whose precise rite will doubtless be further explicated in Paranormal Activity 4. Otherwise, despite a 1988 setting, the new film is content to play creepy variations on the Paranormal Activity formula. This may well be the only mass-market horror series to be indebted to Andy Warhol, whose much maligned Sleep is evoked by long-held shots of people in troubled slumbers, which pay off with unexpected interruptions or appearances in the fixed frame; and to Michael Snow, whose mechanical cameras are homaged by this entry's

CREDITS

Produced by

Jason Blum Oren Peli Steven Schneider Written by Christopher Landon

Based on the film
Paranormal Activity by Oren Peli Director of

Photography Magdalena Gorka Edited by Gregory Plotkin Production Designer

Jennifer Spence

Sound Design Peter Brown Stephen P. Robinson Costume Designer

Leah Butler Visual Effects Provided by Hammerhead **Productions** Stunt Co-ordinator Rob King

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cleverest new lick, a camcorder fixed to a swivel fan which pans back and forth between kitchen and living room with a metronomic beat that ratchets tension before delivering a shock payoff.

The surveillance-tape aesthetic means a storyline that proceeds by fits and starts and doesn't completely dovetail with what has gone before, requiring the audience to fill in lacunae for themselves. Here, with young children centre-screen, there's a playfulness that runs to Lewton-style jumps as characters play pranks on each other, plus a clever gag (rooted in M.R. James's 'face of crumpled linen') built around the most basic cartoon type of ghost (a figure under a white sheet). Effective moments mimic key points in such precedents as Poltergeist (more active furniture), The Exorcist (a bullying imaginary friend), Candyman (a 'speak her name three times before the mirror' scene, which works because child actress Chloe Csengery is so good at seeming distressed) and Ghostwatch (children persistently dragged into a cupboard by an unseen force). This is more eventful than previous entries and has a broader seam of post-shock humour, but its ruthless finale leaves room for more revelations next year.

Kim Newman

Films/Room 101, Inc production Executive Producer Akiva Goldsman

CAST Lauren Bittner Chris Smith

Chloe Csengery Katie Jessica Brown Katie Featherstone Hallie Foote Grandma Lois

Dustin Ingram Randy Roser Johanna Braddy Brian Boland Danie Sprague Grayden

adult Kristi

Dolby Digital/Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS In Colour Г1.85:17

Distributor Paramount Pictures UK

7,560 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Carlsbad, California, 2005. Sisters Katie and Kristi find a box of videotapes recorded by their stepfather in 1988; later the tapes are stolen.

Santa Rosa, 1988. Dennis, a wedding video photographer, moves in with Julie, mother of young Katie and Kristi, though her own mother Lois disapproves. Kristi talks about Toby, her imaginary friend. After a seeming earthquake and some odd noises at night, Dennis sets up surveillance videos around the houseand catches various telekinetic activity, as well as Kristi seeming to have serious talks with Toby. Lisa, a babysitter, and Randy, Dennis's assistant, are scared out of the house, and even the sceptical Katie admits that Toby is real and malign. After an especially bad night, when Toby assaults Katie, the family flee to Lois's home in Moorpark, only for Toby to follow. Lois, it seems, is part of a demon-raising coven which has been active for generations. Dennis wakes up alone and runs about the house in panic, finding the coven holding a ritual outside and Julie dead on the stairs. Lois orders Toby to break Dennis's back, which the entity does.



Cat flap: 'Puss in Boots'

Puss in Boots

USA 2011

Director: Chris Miller Certificate U 90m 0s

A spin-off from DreamWorks' appallingly lucrative Shrek franchise, Puss in Boots proves the Antonio Banderas-voiced ginger tomcat a surprisingly able leading man when removed to his own universe.

Much of Puss's pleasure is in the way that, like the Warner Brothers Speedy Gonzales cartoons, it celebrates Latin stereotypes - the fast-working suavity, the toreador's stylised machismo – by affectionately cartooning them. The film is set in a collective popunconscious idea of Mexicanised Spain drawn from Sergio Leone movies and Zorro serials. Instead of the baby's-first-

official soundtrack pop pablum of the Shrek films, Puss is scored with traditional Latin music, sometimes quite nicely integrated, as when Puss and (literal) cat burglar Kitty Softpaws first square-off in a flamenco duel with a full feline band providing flurries of guitar; choreographed by Laura Gorenstein Miller, the scene fulfils the quota for CGI critter danceoffs with unusual panache.

There is, of course, the occasional 'one for the grown-ups' joke slipped in catnip-as-marijuana and whatnot. The real pinches of pleasure, however, come from the film's little visual touches: the cloud that squirts rain when hopped on; the way the Rip Van Winkle-bearded codger Puss encounters in jail absentmindedly slips his skinny wrists out of the shackles they're hanging from before he just as absentmindedly slips them back in; the armoured stagecoach that outlaws

SYNOPSIS A storybook Spain. Puss, a swashbuckling feline adventurer, enters a local cantina. After besting the roughneck clientele in combat, he hears rumour that magic beans are circulating in the hands of 'Jack and Jill', a pair of ogreish outlaws.

Attempting to steal the beans, Puss falls foul of Kitty Softpaws, a beautiful thief with whom Puss immediately begins to flirt. Kitty is working with Puss's old foe Humpty Dumpty – flashbacks reveal that Puss and Humpty were raised in the same orphanage and became blood-brothers, but grew apart when Puss became a hero to their village of San Ricardo while Humpty became a troublemaker, eventually ruining Puss's reputation with his mischief.

Reconciled by necessity, the trio team up and snatch the beans from Jack and Jill in a daring carriage robbery. The beans, once planted, sprout into a stalk that shoots skyward, carrying all three through the clouds. At the top, they discover the giant's castle of legend and hijack the goose that lays golden eggs – actually a fluffy gosling - while fleeing its mysterious, gigantic guardian (the actual giant, Humpty assures his partners, is long dead).

Returning with their loot, the team pass the night celebrating, but Puss wakes to find himself abandoned. Catching up with his former partners in San Ricardo, Puss learns that he's been double-crossed: Humpty and Kitty have been working with Jack and Jill all along. Before Puss can take his revenge, a frame-up by Humpty

A guilty Kitty springs Puss from jail. Meanwhile the gosling's guardian, a giant goose, is on its way to San Ricardo. Together Puss and Humpty fight to protect the village from the goose. Humpty sacrifices himself to save the gosling and village. Puss and Kitty kiss.

Jack and Jill pilot through a painted desert, drawn by wild boars with glowing eyes, which moves like oldfashioned model work. (Incidentally, the 3D effects, particularly the beanstalk ride through the stratosphere, are wonderfully well done.)

The running joke with Puss is his two-sided nature. He is most of the time a nimble anthropomorphic action hero, combining the fleet physicality of Doug Fairbanks with the swagger of Ricardo Montalban - but then he'll quite unexpectedly break character to become any old alley cat, as when chasing and furiously pawing at the glint of a coin's reflection on a wall, a sport any cat fancier will immediately recognise.

What pays the most comic dividends, though, is the character of Humpty. Voiced with a simper by Zach Galifianakis, he's very much the tubby kid you grew up with who never brushed the chip off his shoulder; moon-faced and only intermittently capable of walking, frequently found rolling on his side in crazy, clumsy patterns, but indefatigably arrogant despite (or because of?) his essential helplessness. (There is a flashback montage revealing Humpty's history of treachery that's a real diaphragm workout, counting off a succession of villainous attitudes spread across that broad plane of face.)

Much of the air is sucked out of the film in the last 20 minutes, when Humpty must be redeemed and the tots in the audience taught a valuable lesson - here any comparison with Warners must end, for they always left their scoundrels as scoundrels. But one more formula hardly spoils the concoction, and Puss's amalgam of spaghetti western, monster movie and fairvtale conceits carries the day.

Billy Bob Thornton

Amy Sedaris

Constance Marie

Guillermo del Toro

Mike Mitchell

Andy Beanstalk

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS

Some screenings

Paramount Pictures UK

8.100 ft +0 frames

presented in 3D

Distributor

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Producer Joe M. Aguilar Latifa Ouaou Screenplay

Story Brian Lynch Will Davies Tom Wheeler

Editor Fric Dankewicz Production Designer Guillaume Aretos

Music Henry Jackman Sound Designer Richard King

Visual Effects Supervisor

Head of Character Animation Fabio Lignini

Production Company DreamWorks Animation

Executive Producers Andrew Adams Guillermo del Toro

VOICE CAST

Antonio Banderas Puss in Boots Salma Hayek Zach Galifianakis Humpty Dumpty

Revenge **A Love Story**

Hong Kong 2010 Director: Wong Ching Po Certificate: not submitted 91m

Revenge: A Love Story is the second title to emerge from Hong Kong production stable 852 Films, following Pang Ho Cheung's unflinchingly gory slasher Dream Home (2010), with which it shares a shocking disrespect for pregnant women, the actor Juno Mak and Japanese hardcore adult-video idol Aoi Sola (Biq Tits Zombie). And it begins with parallel scenes of home invasion in which young Chan Kit (Mak) disembowels gravid housewives and murders their husbands.

All this might lead the viewer to expect Revenae: A Love Story to be a sensationally exploitative serial-killer thriller, with only its apocalyptic opening text ("During Armageddon the devil reigns supreme...") and paradoxical title hinting at the confounding approach to theme and genre that will follow. Kit may be unequivocally guilty, and quickly apprehended, but the film's apparently straightforward morality of crime and punishment is about to do an about-face as flashbacks reveal the complicated sequence of events that led to his actions. The pregnant women are merely 'collateral' victims, their husbands being Kit's real targets for they were among the corrupt policemen who greatly wronged Kit and his mentally challenged girlfriend Cheung Wing (Aoi) six months earlier, turning the couple's sweet romance into a horror story in which Kit was beaten and framed for assault while Wing was raped and then institutionalised, herself pregnant with the child of one of her abusers.

Far from endorsing or celebrating Kit's vendetta, however, director Wong Ching Po (Fu bo, Jiang Hu, Mob Sister) keeps us at a critical distance, favouring a desaturated palette, elliptical editing and the god's-eye view afforded by long shots and aerials. By fracturing the natural chronology and opening as Kit exacts the most cold-hearted revenge not only on the genuine malefactors but on their wives and unborn children too, Wong limits our sympathies for this character from the outset, even as he lets the violent injustices done to him and Wing unfold in awful detail.

At heart, Revenge: A Love Story is a tragedy, because innocence is lost and also because the fall is, at least in part, shown to be a matter of choice. Time and again, Wong shows decisions being made: the policemen siding with their chief even though they know he's in the wrong; the retired chief's successor preferring to continue the corruption rather than tell the truth. Most poignantly of all, a final, haunting sequence - either a reverie or flashback in which Kit is shown in an idyllic field with his wheelchair-bound beloved reveals what Kit has left forever behind in pursuing his blood feud to its end.

This is an uncomfortable, messy

portrait of human revenge and divine justice, realised through intense performances, Daniel Findlay's driving score and an all-pervading sense not so much of nihilism as of moral waywardness. 🕪 Anton Bitel

CREDITS

Producer Scriptwriters Wong Ching Po Jill Leung Original Story Juno Mak Director of Photography Jimmy Wong Editors Wong Ching Po Cheung Ka Fai Art Director Original Music Daniel Findlay Sound Mixer Chen Chi Kien Costume Designers

Wen Choi Rennie Tse ©ETA Limited Production Company

CAST Juno Mak Chan Kit Aoi Sola

Cheung Wing

Lau Wing Chiu Siu Ho Wong Shee Tong Ho Wah Chiu Lam Ling Yuen Ting Zai Sun Wai Lin Lo Yu Lin Chueng Kin Yee

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles

Distributor Terracotta Distribution

Not submitted for theatrical classification Video certificate: 18 Running time: 90m 50s

Hong Kong theatrica

Fuk sau che chi sei

SYNOPSIS Hong Kong, the present. In two separate incidents just days apart, 23-year-old Chan Kit cuts the foetuses from two pregnant women and murders their policeman husbands Ting Zai and Lao Guay. The policemen's colleagues Jeff and Kwok Hua apprehend and torture Kit. On hearing the news of Kit's arrest, pregnant Cheung Wing burns a photograph of herself with Kit and cuts open her own belly. Six months earlier, Kit falls in love with Wing, a mentally challenged schoolgirl. When Wing's elderly guardian dies, Kit rescues her from the welfare department; Wing's former neighbour, prostitute Ling, invites the lovers to stay overnight in her apartment while she visits a client. As Kit is cooking, drunken Do Ge enters the apartment and, thinking Wing a prostitute, assaults her, before being knocked out by Kit. Reporting the attempted rape to Zai, Guay, Jeff and Hua at the local police station, the couple realises that Ge is in fact the police chief. Ge, joined by Guay, finishes raping Wing. Realising that Wing is no prostitute, Ge and his colleagues frame Kit for assault, and intimidate Wing into silence. Six months later, pregnant Wing greets Kit outside the prison. Back to the present, and with a third attack on a pregnant woman (in fact Wing) reported, Jeff and Hua are ordered to release Kit. They phone Ge (now retired). Kit moves Wing from hospital in a commandeered ambulance, and kills Hua and Jeff en route when they attack him. Ge arrives, wounding Wing and leaving Kit for dead. Five years later, the recovered Kit visits Ge, now a Christian minister. Ge states that he has forgiven Kit, but Kit shoots him

dead. Kit is killed by Ge's choirboys.

Romantics Anonymous

France/Belgium 2010 Director: Jean-Pierre Améris Certificate 12A 77m 43s

An awkward bit of translation belies the offbeat premise of Romantics Anonymous, the seventh feature from director Jean-Pierre Améris. The film's French title -Les Emotifs anonymes – refers to a real-life 12-step programme for the 'emotionally challenged' - people who, as the filmmaker explains in the press notes, suffer from such severe shyness that they are in an almost permanent state of tension, unable to function in everyday life. For fictional EA member Angélique (Isabelle Carré) the condition results in fainting fits when asked to speak; factory owner Jean-René (Benoît Poelvoorde), meanwhile, has to carry around a briefcase full of clean shirts to stem the tides of sweat he produces under the slightest pressure. When Angélique, rallied by the other members of her support group, gets up the nerve to apply for a job with Jean-René's chocolate business, he immediately declares, "She's the one!" But the obvious chemistry between them is thwarted at every turn by their social inadequacies, not the least of which is their evident terror of the opposite sex.

The ensuing comedy is delightfully old-fashioned, both in its feel and its look. DP Gérard Simon, designer Sylvie Olivé and costumier Nathalie du Roscoät cast the city of Lyon in a 1940s palette of olive greens, raspberries and ochres, its residents in doublebreasted suits, dirndl skirts, cardigans and tweeds. A couple of musical interludes bring Jacques Demy to mind, while the screwball humour, deadpan delivery and small-town atmosphere are reminiscent of such classics as The Shop Around the Corner (1940). Indeed, so thoroughly is the film bathed in nostalgia that it strikes one as jarringly anachronistic when modern-life intrudes on proceedings, as when Angélique introduces a webcam into the chocolatier's oldschool artisan workshop.

The relationship between the curmudgeonly bachelor and the overenthusiastic ingénue is charmingly chaste, if predictably paternalistic in its ultimate outcome, which sees Jean-René literally coaxing his childish paramour out of a cupboard and into the big world beyond. And yet it's also somewhat disappointing. Two of the most exciting actors working in French-language cinema today, Carré and Poelvoorde have form in playing misfits and weirdos - she in Michel Spinosa's Anna M. (2007), and he in, well, almost every film he's appeared in, but most notoriously Man Bites Dog (1992). In comparison with their past work, then, the quirky oddballs they play here seem tepid, pale and quite predictable. For who among us hasn't felt the clammy combination of awkwardness and terror that the object of affection can inspire? When all's said and done, are Angélique and Jean-René



Twice shy: Benoît Poelvoorde, Isabelle Carré

so different from the rest of us? As the film draws to a close, one longs for a truly twisted ending in the vein of Steven Shainberg's Secretary (2002), which took its socially maladjusted soulmates into altogether darker territory. But although Améris's characters insist that it's the bitterness in chocolate that really gives it character, it's just such bite that

Catherine Wheatley

Romantics Anonymous is lacking.

CREDITS

Produced by Philippe Godeau Nathalie Gastaldo Screenplay/Dialogue Philippe Blasband From an original idea by Jean-Pierre Améris Director of

Photography Editing Philippe Bourgueil
Art Direction Original Music Pierre Adenot

Sound

lean-Pierre Duret Marc Bastien François Groult Costumes Nathalie du Roscoät

@Pan-Européenne StudioCanal, France 3 Cinéma, Rhône-Alpes Cinéma, Climax Films, RTBF (Télévision belge)

Production **Companies** Pan-Européenne

presents in association with StudioCanal a Pan Européenne. StudioCanal, France 3 Cinéma, Rhône-Alpes

RTBF (Télévision belge) co-production with the participation of Canal+. CinéCinéma and France Télévisions In association with Banque Postale Image Cinéimage 4, Uni Étoile 7 With the support of Tax Shelter du Gouvernement Fédéral belge, Casa Kafka Pictures, Dexia With the support of MEDIA Programme of the European Community, Procirep and Angoa-Agicoa and the participation of Région Rhône-Alpes and Centre National du Cinéma et de l'image animée A film by Jean-Pierre Améris

CAST Benoît Poelvoorde Jean-René Isabelle Carré Angélia. Lorella Cravotta Magda Lise Lamétrie

Antoine Pierre Niney Ludo Stephan Wojtowicz

Swann Arlaud

psychologist

Jacques Boudet Rémi Alice Pol

Adèle Céline Duhamel Philippe Fretun

Maxime Grégoire Ludig

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Entertainment

6,994 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title Les Émotifs anonymes

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan

People's Republic of China/ USA 2011

Director: Wayne Wang Certificate 12A 104m 8s

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, an unabashedly sentimental adaptation of Lisa See's bestseller about the travails of female friends in 19th-century China, could have been an interesting further development in Wayne Wang's filmography, which has explored the Chinese-American experience extensively from 1982's quirky Chan Is Missing to the whisper-quiet generationgap drama A Thousand Years of Good Prayers (2007).

Sadly, this lavish but mawkish women's picture turns out to be a pallid rehash of Wang's own The Joy Luck Club (1993), in which the 'Lao Tong' - sworn friendship - of two sets of women replaces the fond and fractious mother-daughter bonds of his earlier work. The new film has none of its predecessor's adroitness in mixing historical melodrama and believably crunchy latter-day relationships, however. Tacking a contemporary plot strand about a parallel female friendship in Shanghai on to See's period story, presumably in an attempt to add 'relevance' or emulate The Iov Luck Club's down-the-generations appeal, is a big misjudgement from which it never recovers. As the script strives for resonance between the two narratives, the new plot seems laboured and faintly superfluous, switching restlessly between the tragedy-tinged friendship of 1980s teenagers Nina and Sophia and the grown Nina's quest to find out about Sophia's recent disappearance. Soap opera-style, it's delivered in thin layers that withhold story development to spin it out around the weightier period half (Sophia conveniently has an aunt whose only

apparent interests are Lao Tong history and supplying timely plot points).

Snow Flower and Lily's bumpy lifelong bond, which starts in rural Hunan Province in 1829, is fortunately a more dramatically satisfying tale, despite being a series of encounters plucked from the book's fatter narrative. Rich in historical detail about the plight of Chinese women as the pair survive foot-binding, forced marriage and domestic abuse, it's also richer in emotion than its modern equivalent. Gianna Jun (My Sassy Girl) and Li Bingbing, who play both sets of friends but seem hamstrung by the shrill, inexplicably English dialogue of the Shanghai scenes, blossom when recreating this deep romantic friendship, despite the fact that Jun, who is Korean, appears to have been revoiced for some of the Mandarin dialogue.

Notwithstanding its fascination with how the Lao Tong tradition allowed downtrodden women a sustaining emotional union, the film is ambivalent about the relationship's swooning intensity (amplified by Rachel Portman's score, full of sobbing strings), which acquires an erotic tinge when Lily spies on Snow Flower and her husband having sex. Li Bingbing in particular invests Lily's love with a palpable yearning, trembling with longing at their reunions and rigid with suppressed despair when Snow Flower acquires rival Lao Tong 'sisters'. Her damped-down performance as Lily is the only one that registers, since Jun's Sophia/Snow Flower relies on a sweet-faced passivity, and the male roles surrounding them are sketchy, including a curious laidback cameo from Hugh Jackman as Sophia's boyfriend, crooning a show tune in Mandarin.

Visually, Wang and cinematographer Richard Wong's compare-and-contrast approach seems as overworked as the rest of the piece. Period sequences reek of stifling tradition in rich colours and static painterly compositions, but the businesslike blue-greys and brisk handheld camera of the Shanghai scenes work overtime to suggest a city



Friends reunited: Li Bingbing, Gianna Jun

SYNOPSIS France, the present. Painfully shy Angélique attends regular meetings of 'Emotives Anonymous', a support group for emotionally challenged people. Jean-René is the owner of an ailing chocolate business who is in therapy to conquer his fear of women. Angélique successfully applies for a job at Jean-René's company but is horrified when she learns that it's a sales position. Her resolve to resign is thwarted, however, when on the advice of his therapist Jean-René asks her to dinner. The awkward evening that ensues comes to an abrupt end when Jean-René, overwhelmed with embarrassment, sneaks out via the toilets.

product, Angélique reveals to her support group that she is in fact a master chocolatier who guards her anonymity by using the name 'the Hermit'. In order to share her skills with Jean-René and his staff, she sets up a webcast with the Hermit, concealing her real identity, though only Jean-René is fooled. Jean-René and Angélique decide to launch the resulting products at an international chocolate conference. A reservations mix-up forces them to share a hotel room; that night they admit their feelings for one another and share a passionate embrace - only for Jean-René to run away again. Angélique returns to Lyon heartbroken.

her support group. On the day of their wedding, he finds her hiding in a cupboard. The pair flee their impending nuptials together.

and a culture in rapid transition. The final effect is one of thematic excess, the film's insistence on linking 19thcentury oppression and the dilemmas of today's Chinese womanhood sincere but spurious. When Nina massages her stiletto-cramped feet as a leaden nod towards the agonies of ancestral foot-binding it looks less like sisterly solidarity and more like overkill.

Kate Stables

CREDITS

Produced by Wendi Murdoch Florence Sloan Screenplay

Angela Workman Ron Bass Michael K. Ray Based on the book by Lisa See Director of

Photography Richard Wong Edited by Production Designer Man Lim Chung

Music Rachel Portman Location Sound Mixe Christopher Quilty Costume Designe Man Lim Chung

©IDG China Creative Media Ltd and Big Feet Productions LLC Production Companies

Fox Searchlight Pictures presents in association with IDG China Creative Media Limited a Big Feet production A film by Wayne Wang

Executive Producers Hugo Shong Ron Bass

CAST

Gianna Jun Snow Flower/Sophia Li Bingbing Vivian Wu Aunt Jiang Wu Russell Wong Coco Chiang Jingyun Hu Archie Kao

Dolby Digital/DataSat Digital Sound/SDDS In Colour [2.35:1]

Hugh Jackman

Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)

9,372 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Shanghai, present day. Businesswoman Nina finds her estranged best friend Sophia in a coma after an accident. She begins reading Sophia's manuscript about the lifelong bond between Sophia's 19th-century ancestor Snow Flower and friend Lily.

Snow Flower and Lily endure a long separation when they are married to, respectively, brutal and unfeeling husbands; then the death of Snow Flower's son during the Taiping Rebellion severs their friendship.

Snow Flower and Lily's story is layered with the parallel story of Nina and Sophia's teenage friendship, which survives Sophia's father's suicide, Nina sitting Sophia's college entrance exam for her, and Nina's meteoric career. Their friendship founders, however, when Sophia decides to leave for Australia with her new boyfriend. Nina seeks to discover what befell Sophia after their friendship faltered, and finds that the two stories mirror one another: just as the grieving Snow Flower shunned her friend to spare Lily the burden of loving her, Sophia broke with Nina to let her take a New York promotion without guilt at leaving her. Inspired by Lily and Snow Flower's deathbed reconciliation, Nina places their fan of secret messages into Sophia's hand. Sophia wakes from her coma.

Surviving Life

Czech Republic/Japan 2010 Director: Jan Svankmajer Certificate 15 108m 57s

Initially billed as his screen swan song (though an adaptation of Karel Capek's The Insect Play has since been announced), the veteran Czech surrealist's sixth feature is his first out-and-out comedy, and arguably his most immediately accessible film. Indeed, much of the script, with its midlife crises, awkward romantic entanglements and lengthy sessions on the psychiatrist's couch, could have fuelled a Woody Allen or Marshall Brickman project from 30 years earlier, though they might have balked at the visual treatment.

The adjective 'Gilliamesque' hints at the flavour, though Terry Gilliam's cut-out animation style was itself inspired by Svankmajer's fellow central Europeans Walerian Borowczyk and Jan Lenica. It's not unprecedented in Svankmajer's own work either, as demonstrated by his collage encyclopedia Svank-Meyers Bilderlexikon (1972-73) and the 'Eros and Thanatos' cycle (1997) fusing material cut from anatomical textbooks and pornographic magazines. A crudely animated avatar of Svankmajer himself appears at the start to explain that the film's low budget dictated this approach ("This is not an experiment, just a poor imperfect substitute for a live-action film"), a cheekily disingenuous apologia that's undermined by the visual sophistication of what follows.

An animated watermelon inflates like a balloon and falls, the real thing's pulpy innards smashing on the ground. Cut-out conversations are punctuated by close-ups of live-action mouths. An animated bag lady (Evzen's superego) pushes a pram stuffed with real bones, while the dream-woman (Evzen's anima) sprouts flowers at moments of ecstasy, triggering a sexualised closeup of a red iris stamen. This constant blurring of media is parallelled by a narrative that flits blithely between dream and reality, even in sequences not explicitly signalled as oneiric. It's a set of virtuoso variations on what ultimately turns out to be a comparatively small collection of Freudian symbols, most of which derive directly from Evzen's longsuppressed childhood memories.

Much of this is as wittily unsettling as anything in Svankmajer's output (the giant, visibly aroused teddy bears are the stuff of adult nightmares), though Surviving Life's overall artistic success is somewhat mixed. Notwithstanding his opening claim that his introduction was necessary to make up a too-brief running time, the film feels overstretched (a common problem with Svankmajer's features), and it has his talkiest script by far, interrupting the constant visual surprises with uncharacteristically copious subtitles.

Although the more intensively conversational scenes are offset by witty visual gags (notably the warring portraits of Freud and Jung in the



Dreamcatcher: Václav Helsus

psychiatrist Dr Holubová's consulting room, their punch-ups sending real shards of glass flying), the ongoing verbal interpretations of Evzen's dreams seem uncharacteristically pat for a card-carrying surrealist. However, they are regularly invaded by far less immediately explicable interspecies creatures, the chicken-women harking back simultaneously towards

CREDITS

Producer aromír Kallista Supervising Producers Vera Ferdová Jana Bebrová Written by

Jan Svankmaje Cinematography Jan Ruzicka lurai Galvánek Film Editor Artistic Director

Sound Ivo Spali Costumes Veronika Hrubá Animation Martin Kublák Eva Jakoubková

Jaroslav Mrázek

©Athanor, C-GA Film, Ceská televize, UPP

Production Companies

Athanor Film Production Company (Jaromír Kallista, Jan Svankmajer) A co-production with C-GA Film (Juraj Galvánek), Ceská televize (Jaroslav Kucera, Jirí Kostyr Kristián Suda, Ivan Hubac), UPP (Vít Komrzy, Petr With the support of State Fund of the Czech Republic for the Support and the Development of Czech Cinematography With financial support of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. MEDIA, Eurimages, Ren Corporation Ltd. Tokyo. d-rights Inc., Tokyo, Aura

CAST Evzen/Milar Klára Issová

Jan Pocepicky antiquarian

Conspirators of Pleasure (1996, this film's most obvious precursor in Svankmajer's canon) and Max Ernst's bird-man alter ego Loplop. But it's the film's closing moments, an eerily beautiful but intensely disturbing sequence of a mother and son literally bonding by blood, that finally demonstrate what Svankmajer can achieve at full stretch.

Michael Brooke

Ltd, Tokyo, Yury and Design Co., Ltd, Tokyo A film by Jan Svankmaier

Václav Helsus Zuzana Kronerová Milada Emília Doseková Daniela Bakerová Doctor Holubová Marcel Nemed Jana Olhová

Pavel Novy Karel Brozek Miroslav Vrba Frantisek Polata Ludmila Hanulák

Dolby Digital Surround-EX In Colour []-?? Subtitles

Distributor Verve Pictures/ Illuminations

ft + frames

Czech theatrical title Prezít svuj zivot (teorie a praxe)

SYNOPSIS Beset by strange dreams featuring the same alluring woman (going by various names – Eva, Eliska, Emilia, Elisabeta and finally Evzenie), middle-aged office drone Evzen seeks advice from a colleague, his GP and the psychoanalyst Dr Holubová. The latter explains the meaning of the recurring symbols in the dreams, but is bemused by Evzen's desire to have more, since some include violent encounters with a man named Milan, to whom he bears a strong resemblance. Nagged by his wife Milada to buy a lottery ticket, Evzen wins a suitcase of money. He buys a book, *Dreams and How to Guide Them*, from an antiquarian bookseller. After being fired for reading it at work, Evzen rents a studio flat where he can sleep during the day. His dream relationship produces a child, Peter. Dr Holubová explains that Evzenie is his mother, and that he is having an affair with his animawhile his superego is manifesting itself as a cantankerous bag lady with delusions of grandeur. Evzen finds a photograph that he previously saw in a dream: it shows Evzenie, Peter and a man with a blurred face. He tracks down the photographer, Fikejz, who tells him Evzenie's tragic story: she had a son, Evzen (known as Peter) but, following her husband Milan's fatal accident, she killed herself. The ancient scars on Evzen's wrists are from an unsuccessful attempt to kill him too. Evzen returns to his dream and finds Evzenie in a bath of reddening water. She teaches the now tiny Evzen to swim.

Texas Killing Fields

USA 2011 Director: Ami Canaan Mann Certificate 15 104m 38s

With the glut of slick legal dramas, polished police procedurals and coolly efficient crime-scene investigation shows rapidly reaching saturation point on TV, any feature director hoping to bring a policier to the big screen has their work cut out for them. Recently Werner Herzog and Nicolas Cage took the whole thing way off kilter with the excellent and refreshing Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans, while David Fincher led an all-star cast through the madness of 1970s San Francisco in his masterful serial-killer thriller Zodiac. Both relied on the three nominal aces cinema still holds over television: scope, sustained mood and star wattage. Ami Canaan Mann's Texas Killing Fields, for its part, comes fully apprised of this situation but swiftly parlays whatever cards it has up its sleeve into a hopelessly busted flush.

In a tale inspired by real events, the bodies of young women are turning up in dank, deserted oilfields outside Texas City, and Sam Worthington and Jeffrey Dean Morgan are the mismatched detectives tasked with hunting down the killer through the lawless, stagnant bayous of south Texas. Though it hardly sets the pulse racing, it's a four-square set-up. That, unfortunately, is as good as it gets. The real stars of the film are not the stubbly tough-guy heroes or the seductive decay of the backwoods backdrop but the seriously muddled direction and haphazard editing. Scene piles up on scene without rhyme or reason, second-string characters and subplots wander across the frame with no discernible purpose, and continuity is such that a main character sports an absolute shiner of a black eve fully half an hour before he is hit with the offending shovel. Editing within individual scenes is little better, with odd, lengthy pauses battling it out with uncertain reaction shots.

The distinctive rural setting doesn't fare well either. Local boy Worthington can explain all he wants to New Yorker Morgan about the restless, ungovernable nature of rural Texas, yet apart from some opportunistic moonshiners and a tattooed hoodlum in a muscle car (reminiscent of Snake from *The Simpsons*), it seems a rather



Tex tecs: Jessica Chastain

genteel – if boggy – place by many standards of the genre.

Worthington is decent enough, but the feeling persists that were his character removed from the proceedings wholesale, not only would no one miss his presence but the film could instead spend the time fleshing out Morgan's already more rounded character.

The ever-impressive Stephen Graham looks as if he's just raring to be let off the chain as one of the many suspects, and Chloë Grace Moretz unleashes a couple of bursts of real fire as a troubled teen. Other pluses are the restrained twang of ex-Tinderstick Dickon Hinchcliffe's unobtrusive score and the sulphurous, narcotic night photography of Stuart Dryburgh, which Mann's father Michael – serving here as producer – should especially enjoy.

Adam Lee Davies

CREDITS

Producers
Michael Mann
Michael Jaffe

Written by
Donald F. Ferrarone
Director of
Photography
Stuart Dryburgh
Editor

Cindy Mollo

Production Designer

Aran Reo Mann

Music
Dickon Hinchliffe
Sound Designer
Christopher Barnett
Costume Designer
Christopher Lawrence

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Production Companies

Anchor Bay Films presents a Blue Light, Block/Hanson, Watley Entertainment production in association with Infinity Media

Executive Producers
Bill Block
Paul Hanson
Justin Thompson

Anthony J.A. Bryan Jr Ethan Smith John Friedberg Michael Ohoven

CAST

Sam Worthington Mike Souder Jeffrey Dean Morgan Brian Heigh Jessica Chastain Pam Stall Chloë Grace Moretz Little Ann Sliger Jason Clarke Rule Annabeth Gish Gwen Heigh Sheryl Lee

Stephen Graham Rhino Corie Berkemeyer Shauna Kittredge

Dolby Digital/DTS In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

9,417 ft +2 frames

SYNOPSIS Texas City, US, present day. Detectives Mike Souder and Brian Heigh investigate the death of a young girl whose body is found behind a gas station. Heigh believes it is connected to many other deaths and disappearances in and around the former oilfields in the next county. Heigh befriends Ann, a troubled teen who lives with her abusive mother and her brother Eugene. Eugene's friend Rhino also uses the house. Another body is found in the fields and Souder and Heigh start receiving taunting calls from the presumed killer. Souder investigates Rhino and then Rule, another suspect. When Ann is abducted, Heigh goes out into the fields to find her; Souder joins him in the fields and they rescue Ann. While Souder takes Ann to safety, Heigh waits for her captors to return; they are revealed to be Eugene and Rhino. The three men fight. Rhino shoots Heigh. Souder tracks the killers to Ann's mother's house. When Ann's mother finds out about her daughter, she, Eugene and Rhino fight; they all die.

Souder brings Ann to live with the injured Heigh.



The thing is...: Eric Christian Olsen, Trond Espen Seim, Ulrich Thomsen

The Thing

USA/Japan 2011

Director: Matthijs van Heijningen Certificate 18 102m 36s

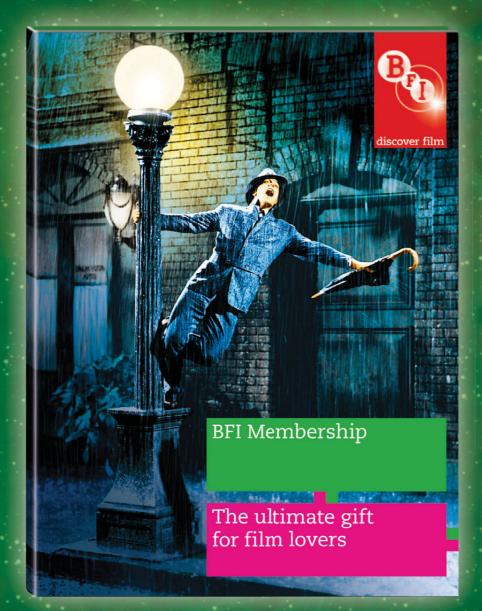
The wisdom of the remake reflex in Hollywood deserves ongoing interrogation - from a simply business perspective, most of the industry's recent reboots have been expensive disasters, either trying to exploit brand projects completely unknown to the all-important 15-25 male demographic (Bewitched? S.W.A.T.? Rollerball?) or miscalculating, as with this reconstitution of John Carpenter's The Thing (1982), how much fans appreciate seeing genre favourites imitated, altered and 'updated'. No one asked for an overhaul of Carpenter's now-revered, character-actor-packed, gooey-gross mega movie (the most addictive film ever set in Antarctica, easy) and so naturally, for our sins, we get one anyway, courtesy of a Dutch first-time director, a web-fiction scribe and presumably a boardroom full of low-wattage company suits. As so often, the 'improvements' on the older film are hardly that, and the slavish homaging only serves to remind us how deft and tense the material once was. However much pulp zest and expertise gets applied, it is at best a compulsive, netzero exercise in echophenomena.

Carpenter's film, of course, was a substantial retooling of Christian Nyby and Howard Hawks's 1951 version of John W. Campbell Jr's story, and the new version borrows substantially from the early film in that the discovery of the alien and its ship frozen in the Antarctic ice serves as a cause to collect frontier men-of-action along with agenda-minded egghead scientist types. But it's also technically a prequel to Carpenter's film (which was written by Burt's son Bill Lancaster), focusing entirely on the Norwegian research outpost that first discovered the long-buried aberration. For our benefit the crew includes a handful of wily Americans.

Thus Ulrich Thomsen's lizard-eyed chief scientist, always preferring to preserve the morphing creature than save a life, is the new counterpart to Robert Cornthwaite's stuffy jerk in Hawks's version, and Ioel Edgerton is Kenneth Tobey's no-bullshit pilot. In pure cost/benefit terms, though, we lose both the sparkling post-war banter of 1951 and the rainbow of idiosyncrasy-under-pressure that defined Carpenter's movie - now, much of the dialogue gives way to meaningful stares, and the characters are reduced to homogeneously testy Nords and rugged-catalogue-model hunks. (There's a sociopolitical hint of smug Norwegians facing off against dumbass Yanks, but only a hint.) The rather odd exception is the diminutive, doe-eyed Mary Elizabeth Winstead as the bright paleontologist heroine, pretty but unsexy and more or less ignorable to the burly men around her. It's inspired characterisation and casting, if only because it fits no action-

SYNOPSIS Antarctica, 1982. Norwegian scientists discover a spaceship and alien buried in the ice, and experts are called in, along with American pilots and a young American paleontologist, Dr Kate Lloyd. After excavating the specimen, the chief scientist unwisely orders a sample to be taken through the ice block. This awakens the creature; it escapes, and begins stalking the personnel at the base. Soon it becomes clear to Lloyd that the creature imitates other life forms on a cellular level. She realises that anyone could be a fabrication of the alien – unless they have tooth fillings, which the creature can't replicate. Tension mounts, people disappear, and it becomes increasingly difficult to keep track of who may or may not be alien. Eventually Lloyd and a surviving pilot chase the creature to the spacecraft; it starts up the ship, trying to escape. Lloyd kills the creature. Back at the wrecked base, the last Norwegian pursues a single dog he believes to be an alien imitation into the snow.









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Films

movie paradigm, and her incongruity can, at moments, be convincing. One does not, after all, need manly muscles to work a flamethrower.

The beats otherwise are nearly the same and predictably subject to overkill; instead of the single spiderlegged crawling head (prompting the Carpenter movie's most memorable are-you-kidding moment of frisson), we get digital explosions of insectoid legs and mouths and projectile tongues, hyperextended in scene after scene until we start wondering what's keeping the multifaceted slime-beast from just transforming into one of the many humans it's ingested, as it's supposed to. Instead it lopes and leaps around on all fives and sixes. with various human faces and arms sticking out of it at unhelpful angles. (Not to quibble, but the script's finetuning of the Thing's weakness - its inability to replicate inorganic matter, like teeth fillings – collapses in the face of all those synthetic ski jackets, boots and zippers.)

It's no surprise by this point that the limitless mayhem of CGI is tiresome and unimpressive in its very limitlessness; the spectacle of unearthly chaos is meaningless if we know it all actually happened on a hard drive. The grotesque mutational hyperbole of Carpenter's film, all of it crafted by Rob Bottin and Stan Winston in a world of real light, physics and time, is a relatively stunning achievement, and far more unsettling. The new film's ending recreates the hypnotic dog-andhelicopter lead-in to the earlier film, which is supposed to set us salivating for another sequel-remake. But it only makes the Carpenter film beckon all the more seductively. • Michael Atkinson

CREDITS

Produced by Marc Abraham Eric Newman Written by

Eric Heissere Based on the story Who Goes There? by John W. Campbell J

Director of Photography Michel Abramowicz

Editors Julian Clarke Peter Boyle Production Designe

Sean Haworth Music Marco Beltrami

Supervising Sound Editors Scott Hecker

Elliott L. Koretz Costume Designer Visual Effects and Animation

Image Engin Digital Visual Effects

Stunt Co-ordinator

©Universal Studios Production

Companies Universal Pictures presents in association with Morgan Creek Productions a Strike Entertainment production In association with

Executive Producers I Miles Dale

David Foster Lawrence Turman Gabrielle Niemand

CAST

Mary Flizabeth Kate Llovd Joel Edgerton Braxton Carte Adewale Akinnuoye

Agbaje Ulrich Thomsen Dr Sander Halvorson Eric Christian Olsen Trond Espen Seim Edvard Wolne

Paul Braunstein Kim Bubbs Jørgen Langhelle

Jan Gunnar Røise Stig Henrik Hoff Kristofer Hiviu

Jonas

Dolby Digital/Datasat Digital Sound/SDDS In Colour Г2.35:17

Distributor International UK & Fire

9 234 ft +0 frames



Attack the block: Ben Stiller, Eddie Murphy

Tower Heist

USA/Japan 2011 **Director: Brett Ratner** Certificate 12A 104m 17s

Of all the changes ushered in by the banking collapse of 2008, few could have predicted the genesis of the Marxist-Leninist caper movie. For that is surely what director Brett Ratner had in mind when he set up Ben Stiller to lead a group of loyally long-suffering service workers in a sting against their crooked investment-banker overlord.

The film posits the fictional Tower Heights condo as a microcosm of postcrash society, with the Joes who work for the super-rich residents conned out of their pensions by Arthur Shaw, a folksy, wholly plausible banker whose crooked schemes render their decades of toil meaningless. When it becomes clear that Shaw has a secret slush fund, Stiller's renegade manager Josh Kovaks determines to steal it, thus restoring a future to the swindled workers. To do this, he recruits his polar opposite in terms of values, Eddie Murphy's streetwise crook Slide.

As the man behind the Jackie Chan/Chris Tucker attention-deficit actioner Rush Hour (1998) and its carbon-copy descendants, Ratner has form in the buddy-movie genre. The Rush Hour franchise underlined the staying power that a little chemistry can bring to the hokey mismatched-cop idea, but it's an onscreen connectivity that Tower Heist sorely lacks, even with Stiller assaying his now well-honed mensch, in theory a perfect foil for Murphy's jive-ass antics. And Kovaks is a nice guy: he arrives at work to a flurry of daps, high-fives, holas and other cultural-specific greetings, and knows the name and point of origin of every immigrant doorman, desk clerk and cleaner in the building.

Scenes involving the staff are warmly lit vignettes of huddled masses chasing the American Dream from one swingshift to the next. By contrast, the Tower's residents are never seen interacting with each other, Alan Alda's duplicitous Arthur Shaw approaching the world only through the staff.

Matthew Broderick's broker Chase Fitzhugh, bankrupt and under threat of eviction, seems almost invisible to the other residents, and it's left to Kovaks to show a human reaction to his plight.

But Tower Heist is no Bread & Roses (2000), nor is it intended to be. Whatever social comment may be inherent serves the same purpose as every other co-opted story here: to get Eddie Murphy swearing really, really fast; to shoehorn in a car chase; and to have the audience leave the cinema assured that justice has prevailed. Despite the fact that Murphy's character has no motivation and no real place in the script (beyond the actor's name on the producer credits), or that Casev Affleck is wasted as Kovaks's wheedling

CREDITS

Producers Brian Graze Eddie Murphy

Kim Roth Written by Ted Griffin Jeff Nathanson

Story Adam Cooper Bill Collage Ted Griffin Director of

Photography Edited by Production Designe Kristi Zea

Music Christophe Beck Production Sound Todd Maitland Costume Designer Sarah Edwards

Ol Iniversal Studios Production **Companies** Universal Pictures and

Imagine Entertainment present in association with Relativity Media a Brian Grazer production A Brett Ratner film n association with Dentsu Inc. Filmed with the support of the New York State Governor's Office for Motion Picture and Television Development

Executive Producers Karen Kehela Sherwood

Ben Stiller Josh Kovak Eddie Murphy

Casey Affleck Charlie Gibbs Alan Alda Arthur Shaw Matthew Broderick Mr Fitzhugh Téa Leoni Special Agent Claire

CAST

Denham Judd Hirsch Michael Peña Enrique Dev'Reaux Gabourey Sidibe

Odessa Monte Stephen McKinley Henderson

brother-in-law, the film may have enough in the tank to rank alongside middleweight boss-baiters Nine to Five (1980) or Swimming with Sharks (1994). It comes off less well, though, against its natural predecessor, Paul Schrader's Blue Collar (1978): in that bleakly comic trawl through the lower reaches of working-class desperation, Richard Pryor and Harvey Keitel's Detroit autoworkers take to blackmail to even the score. But Blue Collar's caperish plot is constantly undercut by a raw sadness at the truncated ambitions of its protagonists, adding a layer of bitter realism that's entirely and fatally missing from Ratner's altogether more cosy take on life on the bottom rung.

Paul Fairclough Nina Arianda Marcia Jean Kurtz

> Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour Г2 35·11

Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Eire

9.385 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS New York, the present. Josh Kovaks is the manager of Tower Heights condominium. On his way to work one morning, he is hassled in the street by local criminal Slide. The next day, the block's wealthiest resident, banker Arthur Shaw, is arrested for fraud. The investigating officer reveals that Shaw has stolen the pension fund and personal savings of the Tower staff, one of whom attempts suicide. Kovaks, his brother-in-law Charlie and new bellboy Dev'Reaux confront Shaw in his penthouse, where Kovaks attacks Shaw's prized car, parked in the living room. All three men are fired. Kovaks retreats to a bar and gets drunk with an FBI officer who jokingly suggests he rob Shaw.

Kovaks recruits Slide to train him and his friends in the criminal arts. The team break into Shaw's apartment but are double-crossed by Slide, whose gun goes off, revealing that Shaw's car is made of gold. In the glove compartment, Kovaks discovers a ledger proving Shaw's guilt. The team are arrested after attempting to winch the car down the side of the building. Kovaks cuts a deal to hand over the ledger in return for his friends' freedom. Shaw is jailed. Kovaks's colleagues meet on the roof of Shaw's penthouse, where the car is hidden in the swimming pool.

Across the city, Tower employees receive packages containing various car parts made of gold.

Trespass

USA 2011

Director: Joel Schumacher Certificate 15 90m 55s

Has Joel Schumacher ever taken an actor aside and said, "That was good, but I want you to turn it down a little in the next take..."?

Recall Nic Cage squirming and gibbering while watching a snuff movie in 1999's 8MM? There Schumacher directed Cage to one of the most ridiculous bits of acting he's ever done—and not in the electric, expressionistic way that makes his plumminess a pleasure, for Schumacher's films have a particular quality of going over the top not by bounding leaps but with a wearisome chore of a climb.

In Trespass, Schumacher and Cage reunite, with Cage playing the beleaguered patriarch of the Miller family, opposite Nicole Kidman as his wife Sarah. These two slightly plasticine, waxwork figures in their display-room house are morbidly watchable in a reality-TV way as avatars of upper-middle-class dysfunction — though it seems cruel to now be watching Kidman playing a woman reduced to yanking price-tags off her new lingerie in sexual frustration.

Once the home invaders trespass on *Trespass*, however, it becomes remarkably akin to almost every other film of this ilk, for there are only so many ways to skin the particular held-hostage cat. (One can guess that the recent popularity of the home-invasion picture is owed to a combination of middle-class anxiety, covetous lower-class revenge fantasy and the modest overheads of a single-location shoot.)

The decibel level is kept jacked so high from this point on that none of the personnel can express much more than various degrees of fear, rage and hysteria over the jungle-drumming soundtrack, with occasional turn-offs into greasy perversity ("Pour me some wine," says one gunman to Kidman, "I want you to serve me"). The rest of the dialogue is mostly of the "Don't fuck with me!" "Open the safe!" "Where is the money?" "You hurt her and I will kill you!" ilk. These are not performances you can evaluate, any more than you could pick

out a standout performance from the din of a kennel. Ben Mendelsohn, as the leader of the bandits, gives *Trespass* a rather devastating autocritique: "I'm fucking sick of you yelling all the time... Everyone just shut the fuck up!" One fears that Schumacher has been assured that this sort of claustrophobic intensity is his strong suit as director because of his last whopping box-office success, 2002's *Phone Booth*. This isn't true. Schumacher's one discernible gift is staying consistently employed.

About the best that can be said of *Trespass*'s pacing is that it dispenses new nuggets of narrative information as though they were on timed release. The plot has as many wrinkles as a nude nonagenarian, and the film is about as pleasant to behold.

Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Produced by Irwin Winkler David Winkler

Rene Besson Written by Karl Gajdusek

Director of Photography Andrzej Bartkowia Edited by

Bill Pankow Production Designer Nathan Amondson Music Composed, Arranged and

Produced by
David Buckley
Sound Designer
Sean Garnhart
Costume Designer

©Trespass Productions

Production

Companies
Millennium Films
presents a Nu Image
production and a
Winkler Films
production in
association with Saturn
Films
A film by Joel

Schumacher
Executive Producers

Avi Lerner Danny Dimbort Trevor Short Boaz Davidson John Thompson

CAST

Nicolas Cage Kyle Miller Nicole Kidman Sarah Miller Ben Mendelsohn Elias

Cam Gigandet Jonah Liana Liberato Avery Miller Jordana Spiro

Dash Mihok Ty Emily Meade Kendra

Nico Tortorella Jake Brandon Belknap Dylan Terry Milam

Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]

Distributor Lionsgate UK

8,182 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS US, the present. Diamond dealer Kyle Miller returns to his modernist mansion, where he lives with his estranged wife Sarah and rebellious teenage daughter Avery. After Avery sneaks out to a friend's party, a gang of four criminals – Elias, Jonah, Ty and Elias's girlfriend Petal – break into the Millers' home disguised as security police. Elias, the thugs' leader, demands that Kyle open his safe, but Kyle starts bargaining with him, arguing that the diamonds inside the safe have no resale value without him as an agent.

Avery returns home and is also taken prisoner. Kyle overpowers one of the gang and acquires a weapon, but the Millers are outgunned in return. It is revealed that Jonah had access to the house while installing a security alarm, and it is suggested he might have had a fling with Sarah. When the safe is finally opened it is empty: Kyle explains that he is a middleman, living on credit. The gang start looking for new ways to make the break-in pay.

Avery lures Petal out of the house with promises of loot at a rich kid's party; she puts Petal out of action by deliberately crashing the family car. Meanwhile Kyle and Sarah escape to a tool shed behind their house. After a fight, the thieves discover a stash of money that Kyle has hidden in the shed. Avery returns and threatens Elias with a gun. When Elias in turn threatens Sarah, Jonah shoots him. Kyle sets fire to the tool shed, killing Jonah.

The family flee the flames, penniless but together again.

A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas

USA 2011

Director: Todd Strauss-Schulson Certificate 18 89m 31s

At one point in A Very Harold & Kumar 3D Christmas, Kumar (Kal Penn) drifts out of a serious conversation to watch Bob Clark's 1983 comedy A Christmas Story on TV, catching the scene where 'Ralphie' Parker gets his tongue stuck to a frozen pole. This sets up a scene later in 3D Christmas where Harold (John Cho), having been kidnapped by mobsters and tied to a girder, works his way loose only to discover that, yes, his penis has rather inexplicably stuck to the frozen surface.

This describes the basic 'ho ho ho' formula of 3D Christmas, which adds a dash of the obscene to spike familiar holiday material like so much eggnog (and spiked eggnog does come into play here). Santa Claus? He'll smoke out of a candy-cane bong. Beloved songand-dance man Neil Patrick Harris? He returns to string out the series's running joke that he is, away from the limelight, a psychotic rapist – explaining his resurrection after being gunned down in the last film as a result of "cockblocking" Jesus having booted him out from heaven. And of course Christmas is ultimately about the children, so the one child on screen - the toddler daughter of Harold's hapless tagalong friend Todd (Thomas Lennon) - is exposed to pot smoke, cocaine clouds and ecstasy.

Like the first two Harold & Kumar films. 3D Christmas is written by Ion Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg. Those first two instalments were conceived very much in reaction to the culture of the Bush II era – and, like the Jon Stewart-helmed The Daily Show, tended to be overrated by leftish writers for their self-positioned roles as 'resistance' comedy (Penn has parlayed his symbolic import into a second career, taking a job with the Obama administration in the Office of Public Engagement). In Harold & Kumar Get the Munchies (2004), the quotidian mission of the title/synopsis became a metaphorical quest for the fulfilment of the American Dream, for in the film's context 'America' is indivisible from shitfaced late-night runs for lousy 24-hour fast food, "This is about

achieving what our parents set out for," proclaim the sons-of-immigrants whose fecklessness is a marked defiance of traditional expectations about first-generation striving. Where 2008's Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay offered broad satire of closed-border phobias, this third instalment completes the process of the protagonists' assimilation, rather cosily settling into a 'post-racial' America where everyone can celebrate a tastefully de-Christianised Christmas.

The lack of an agenda in this third go-around is by no means a bad thing – it frees 3D Christmas to commit itself to nothing but irreverence, with the mixed comic results that have been this trilogy's one consistent feature. The third dimension is put to use wafting clouds of pot smoke towards the viewer or, in one egregious instance of strained outrageousness, waving a Claymation dong in your eye. This sort of naughtiness aside, the film is on most solid comic ground when updating the proud American comic tradition, from vaudeville to Don Rickles, of inter-ethnic ribbing, making for a minor-if-likeable capstone to a minor-if-likeable series.

Nick Pinkerton

CREDITS

Produced by Greg Shapiro Written by

Jon Hurwitz Hayden Schlossberg Based on characters created by Jon Hurwitz, Hayden Schlossberg

Director of Photography Michael Barrett Edited by Eric Kissack Production Designer Rusty Smith

Music William Ross Sound Mixer Scott D. Smith Costume Designer Mary Claire Hannan

©New Line Productions, Inc. Production

Companies New Line Cinema presents in association with Mandate Pictures a Kingsgate Films production Executive Producers

Executive Producer Nathan Kahane Nicole Brown Richard Brener Michael Disco

Samuel J. Brown Film Extracts Madea's Family Reunion (2006)

CAST

John Cho Harold Lee Kal Penn Kumar Patel Neil Patrick Harris Neil Patrick Harris, 'NPH'

Paula Garces
Maria
Danneel Harris

Danneel Harris
Vanessa
Eddie Kaye Thomas
Rosenberg
David Krumholtz
Goldstein

Bobby Lee Kenneth Park Tom Lennon Todd Amir Blumenfeld

Adrian

Danny Trejo

Mr Perez, Harold's father-in-law

Elias Koteas

Sergei Katsov

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS Colour by Fotokem [2.35:1]

Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd

8.056 ft +8 frames

SYNOPSIS New Jersey, the present. Harold, now a responsible married man, has grown apart from his old stoner friend Kumar, who has dropped out of medical school and is still living in the same squalid apartment. When a package for Harold arrives at Kumar's flat on Christmas Eve, the latter attempts to redirect it, accidentally setting fire to Harold's father-in-law's prized Christmas tree in the process. Attempting to find a replacement before Harold's in-laws return from Midnight Mass, Harold, Kumar and their respective new friends venture out into New York City.

The tree hunt lands Harold and Kumar in various perilous situations: they are held hostage in the townhouse of a Russian mobster; they find themselves dancing on stage in a Neil Patrick Harris Christmas spectacular; they even hitch a ride in Santa's sleigh. They fail to find a replacement tree – but they do rekindle their friendship. Harold confronts his bullying father-in-law, winning his respect. On Christmas Day, everyone smokes pot and peace reigns.

We Have a Pope

Italy/France 2011 Director: Nanni Moretti

"My heart is blighted, and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food. I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof." With these words, taken from Psalm 102, Nanni Moretti's erudite psychoanalyst Bruzzi attempts to convince an audience of cardinals that the Bible discusses depression. Certainly this prayer for an afflicted man eloquently captures the symptoms of the newly elected Pope, who himself claims to be suffering from "psychological sinusitis". But Bruzzi's words fall on deaf ears; after all, he is told, "The soul and the subconscious cannot possibly coexist."

Even at the end of Moretti's Habemus Papamit's not entirely clear if the Supreme Pontiff, formerly known as Cardinal Melville, is suffering from a nervous breakdown, an existential crisis or a loss of faith. But as he awaits presentation to the waiting world, his anguished howl for help reveals that, soul or subconscious, he is a man in torment. Fleeing the faithful for the crowded streets of Rome, convinced that he lacks the gifts God sees in him, he wanders aimlessly and anonymously in search of clarity. Meanwhile, confined to quarters until the Catholic leader can be found and announced to his public, the cardinals and Bruzzi - who has unwittingly found himself party to events - tussle over evolution and creationism.

The two narrative strands offer farce on the one hand, tragedy on the other. In the Vatican, the supremely confident man of science chides the craggy, jowly cardinals for their overreliance on frothy coffees and prescription meds, corralling them into a volleyball tournament. Outside its walls, the anxious man of God weaves his way along the edge of a spiritual precipice, delighting in a performance of Chekov's The Seagull yet despairing of any longterm potential for personal flight. Yet in the wake of Moretti's previous effort, the Berlusconi-baiting satire The Caiman (2006), some have lambasted Habemus Papam's approach to organised religion as toothless. One can see why, as this is an altogether more ambivalent film one that seems as much (if not more) a meditation on the guilt, regret and shame that come with age and acquired wisdom as a pillorying of orthodox hypocrisy. But isn't that the point? As the votes for Pope are cast, a cacophony of prayers echoes through the Vatican's cavernous halls, as each of the cardinals desperately pleads that he not be the chosen one. Time and again the refrain "I can't" is uttered, and even Bruzzi must eventually admit his fallibility.

At the film's beautifully choreographed and extremely sinister climax, Melville accepts, with devastating grace, that his fate is inescapable, and faces his demons — and his public — with dignity. It's a bittersweet finale, all the more



Sweet Sistine: Michel Piccoli

distressing for the film's levity elsewhere, but it's one that rises above cheap shots and, through its very uncertainty about what it wants to say, what it is, offers a kind of emotional honesty. As Melville, 85-year-old Michel Piccoli – once so very virile and lusty – is racked with self-doubt, his Giaconda smile belied by the darting, desperate eyes above it. Kindly, considered, decent, he is a far cry from the corrupt clergymen who populate

CREDITS

Produced by Nanni Moretti Domenico Procacci Story and Screenplay

Nanni Moretti Francesco Piccolo Federica Pontremoli **Director of Photography** Alessandro Pesci

Alessandro Pesci Editor Esmeralda Calabria Art Director Paola Bizzarri Music

Franco Piersanti
Production Sound
Mixer
Alessandro Zanon
Costume Designer

©Sacher Film, Fandango, Le Pacte, France 3 Cinéma Production Companies

Nanni Moretti and Domenico Procacci present a film by Nanni Moretti Made with the contribution of Eurimages A Sacher Film, Fandango, Le Pacte, France 3 Cinéma co-production in collaboration with Rai Cinema in association with Sofica Coficup - a Backup Films fund, Canal+, France Telévisions With the participation of Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée - CNC, Sofica

Coficup, Eurimages

crumpling under the twin burdens of expectation and history, Melville quite literally carries the weight of the world on his shoulders. Small wonder he's crippled by it.

so many caustic satires on the Catholic

undeserved, and who is all the more

scale of his spectacular surroundings,

pitiful for it. Dwarfed by the sheer

Church. This is someone whose

fall from grace seems entirely

Catherine Wheatley

CAST

Michel Piccoli Cardinal Melville Nanni Moretti Bruzzi, psychoanalist Renato Scarpa Cardinal Gregori Jerzy Stuhr

spokesman Franco Graziosi Cardinal Bollati Camillo Milli Cardinal Pescardona Dario Cantarelli member of theatrical

company
Roberto Nobile
Cardinal Cevasco
Gianluca Gobbi
Swiss Guard
Margherita Buy
psychoanalist
Ulrich von Dobschütz

Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1] Subtitles

Distributor Soda Pictures

Italian theatrical title Habemus Papam

SYNOPSIS Vatican City, the present. The pope has died. The cardinals gather to elect his successor, and Cardinal Melville is chosen. The announcement of 'Habemus Papam' ('We have a Pope') goes out to the crowds outside the Vatican, but Melville fails to appear. Wailing to the other cardinals that he isn't up to job, he flees. Taking this to be a simple case of nerves, the cardinals announce that the new Pope has retired to pray before greeting the people. But Melville is intractable. A psychoanalyst, Professor Bruzzi, is called in. His efforts are thwarted by the cardinals, and he recommends that Melville see another doctor in private, suggesting his estranged wife. Bruzzi is told that he, like the cardinals, will be confined to the Vatican, his mobile confiscated, until the matter is resolved.

Melville is smuggled out for his doctor's appointment by the Vatican spokesman, but runs away immediately afterwards. He wanders the streets of Rome, takes a room in a hotel and meets a troupe of actors rehearsing Chekov's *The Seagull*. Back at the Vatican, the spokesman concocts an elaborate story to cover up Melville's absence. When the spokesman realises after three days that Melville has no intention of returning, he confesses his deceit to the cardinals. They set out to find Melville, capturing him at *The Seagull*'s opening night.

The new Pope is presented to the world, but explains to the gathered crowds that he cannot – and will not – perform the role for which God has chosen him.

Welcome to the Rileys

USA 2010 Director: Jake Scott Certificate 15 110m 0s

Jake Scott's quiet character piece strives to avoid sentimental clichés but makes life difficult for itself by starting from a premise so hackneyed that sentimental clichés can't be dissuaded from adhering to it. Grieving middle-class couples distanced from themselves and from one another by the untimely death of a child people American independent cinema as numerously as superheroes and killer robots crowd the multiplex market. And the feisty ingénue all set to transform the life of the ageing protagonist with her potty mouth and hard-knocked innocence feels like a still wearier trope.

However skilled James Gandolfini might be at carrying the weight of American male repression on his bulky shoulders, and however Melissa Leo might work to make her cloistered suburbanite more than a collection of Oscar-mining tics, their characters feel overfamiliar from the off, and are further hidebound by a script that requires them to undertake actions unimaginable in flesh-and-blood people. That means impulsively moving in with a stripper, doing her housework and trying to save her from the streets, in the case of Gandolfini's Doug; and defeating years of agoraphobia in an afternoon in order to make a solo marriage-saving trip, in that of Leo's Lois. The film can't settle on how it feels about these grand gestures darkly ironic parodies of ill-thought-out movie behaviour, or true and deeply felt epiphanies? - with the consequence that the film's tone lurches unevenly between tearjerking sincerity and selfconscious black comedy. When Gandolfini's unlikely do-gooder Doug upbraids his teenage charge Mallory for her bad language, the effect is unsettling: is this a piece of odd-couple silliness played for laughs; a moving manifestation of Doug's frustrated parental impulses; or a painful mismatch between a lfe in which 'fuck' is an obscenity, and one in which it's what you do to get by?

In its keenness to provide answers and redemption, the film can't quite commit to the darkness it implies about Mallory's life, or the Rileys' marriage. As persuasively obnoxious as Kristen Stewart's 16-year-old stripper can be, the squalidness of her life still feels stagey rather than authentic; as in Pretty Woman (1990), the realities of sex work are kept discreetly veiled, a mysterious bogeyman to which the film is too meek to get too close. Gandolfini is effective in a role that clearly references the masked pain of his famous TV creation Tony Soprano, but keeps his menace at bay in favour of his vulnerability; and though Lois's behaviour is given to too many unpredictable flurries of conflicting neurosis, Leo's performance still compels, creating a fragile woman in whom the urge to control is fuelled



Family plot: James Gandolfini, Kristen Stewart

by barely managed pain. Kristen Stewart – who shot this film before the *Twilight* franchise made her a megastar – has a harder task as Mallory, and a character doesn't really emerge out of the streetwise poses and foulmouthed volleys. Ultimately, this gently told, overly earnest film can't resist making her an improbably redeemable dispenser of dimestore life advice: the

tart-with-a-heart in full feelgood effect.

Welcome to the Rileys seeks to take the sleek dysfunction of American Beauty to a darker region; but it doesn't make its characters' dilemmas feel real enough to achieve more than an upbeat urban fairytale, and ends up seeming like a rather too user-friendly walk on the wild side.

Hannah McGill

CREDITS

Produced by
Giovanni Agnelli
Scott Bloom
Michael Costigan
Written by
Ken Hixon
Director of
Photography
Christopher Soos
Edited by
Nicholas Gaster
Production Designer
Happy Massee
Music
Mare Streitenfeld
Production Sound
Mixer
Noah Timan
Costume Designer

Kim Bowen

©WTTR, LLC Production Companies A Scott Free/Argonaut Pictures production A Jake Scott film Samuel Goldwyn Films Destination Films

Executive Producers
Ridley Scott
Tony Scott
Steven Zaillian
Ken Hixon
Manny Mashouf

James Gandolfini Doug Riley Kristen Stewart Mallory Melissa Leo

Lois Riley

Joe Chrest
Jerry
Ally Sheedy
Harriet
Eisa Davis
Vivian
Lance E. Nichols
Hamilton 'Ham' Watkins
Tiffany Coty
Tara
Peggy Walton Walker
Brenda
Sharon Landry

Dolby Digital In Colour Prints by Technicolor [1.85:1]

Kathy Lamkin

Distributor
High Fliers Films Ltd

9.900 ft +0 frames

SYNOPSIS Indianapolis, the present. Middle-aged businessman Doug Riley is sleeping with diner waitress Vivian; meanwhile his wife Lois never leaves the house and keeps their dead daughter's bedroom as a shrine.

Doug is informed that Vivian has died suddenly of a heart attack. After her burial, he visits his daughter's grave, and discovers that his own headstone has been prepared. He confronts Lois. On a business trip to New Orleans, Doug goes alone to a bar and meets young stripper Mallory; he refuses her sexual advances but talks to her and later sees her home. After smoking joints with her, he sleeps chastely in her bed. He calls Lois to say that he will be staying in New Orleans for a while, and tells an associate that he's selling his company. He offers Mallory \$100 a day to stay with her, decorates her apartment and does her laundry. Leaving home for the first time in years, Lois drives to New Orleans; Doug meets her, takes her to Mallory's house and introduces them. Lois confesses to Mallory her guilt about her role in her daughter's car crash. Lois attempts to stop Mallory going to work, but Mallory defies her and storms out.

Later, Mallory calls from the police station, having been beaten by a client. Doug and Lois collect her, but she flees from the car on the way home. Doug and Lois return to Indianapolis. Mallory calls: she has been going to college, and is on her way to Las Vegas.

The Well Digger's Daughter

France 2011
Director: Daniel Auteuil
Certificate PG 109m 2s

For his debut as director, Daniel Auteuil has chosen to remake a film that has a very special resonance in French cinema. Marcel Pagnol's La Fille du puisatier is typical of the Provençal master, with its story of a young woman seduced and abandoned, with an illegitimate child and a severe father. But Pagnol's drama was also very much a war film - shot in 1940 and released in 1941 (with tremendous success), it traces almost in real time the traumatic events of the mobilisation. Phoney War and collapse of France. A famous scene shows the main characters assembled to listen to the radio broadcast of Pétain's declaration of France's surrender, armistice and collaboration with the Germans.

Seventy years on, Auteuil has replaced war actuality with nostalgic heritage. The story is still set just before and during the war, but gone is the Pétain moment which, controversial as it was, anchored the film and gave it a particular poignancy. The war now appears as no more than a background and a narrative ploy to separate the young lovers. But then, Auteuil's reference point, rather than the original Fille du puisatier itself, is the first wave of Pagnol revivals, and in particular Claude Berri's Jean de Florette and Manon des sources (1986), two hugely influential films which among other things turned Auteuil into a star. This new version of La Fille du puisatier shares with the Berri films (and Yves Robert's 1990 La Gloire de mon père and Le Château de ma mère) a lavish celebration of the southern landscape, with sweeping shots of fields and hills, wind rustling through the plane trees, vintage clothing and period music,

especially the Neapolitan ballad 'Catari' and, oddly, some Billie Holiday songs.

Auteuil's vision is both more melodramatic and more romantic than Pagnol's. The brief liaison between the beautiful Patricia (Astrid Bergès-Frisbey) and Jacques (Nicolas Duvauchelle) is given more prominence, while the comic banter between Patricia's welldigger father Pascal (Auteuil) and his assistant Félipe (Kad Merad) is toned down. But in reducing the blatant theatricality of Pagnol and adopting a more naturalistic style, Auteuil paradoxically makes the archaic ideology of the story more jarring. The sinful single mother who must be punished, the obsession with patrilineality, the 'catastrophe' of having daughters, the reconciliation around the - naturally male - child: in the Pagnol films these were a mixture of the filmmaker's personal obsessions and an awareness of soon-to-becomeobsolete Provençal lore. Detached from this historical context, Auteuil's film merely presents an old-fashioned misogynist tale. Defending the film as "a magnificent story of love, tenderness, sorrow and forgiveness". he had to acknowledge that it is replete with "emotions and values... that are in some cases almost taboo today". Yet his film makes no gesture towards criticising those values.

Part of the genius of the Pagnol films of the 1930s and 1940s was the showcasing of virtuoso performances by the likes of Raimu, Charpin and Fernandel. Long takes and unashamedly theatrical dialogue gave them the opportunity to shine in many cult scenes. Auteuil's isn't the first attempt to remake these classics; there was, among others, a 1999 version of Le Schpountz and a 2000 French television version of the Marius-Fanny-César trilogy. But none was really successful, to some extent because of the difficulties for the actors in stepping into the shoes of the earlier stars. It is no accident that Berri and Roberts's hit movies had either never been filmed by Pagnol (Jean de Florette, La Gloire de mon vère) or *Iean de Florette* the earlier version had featured weaker actors (Manon des



I field good: Astrid Bergès-Frisbey

-ilms

sources). In the 2011 La Fille du puisatier, Auteuil and Merad, excellent actors though they are, simply cannot dispel the memory of Raimu and Fernandel.

It may be that comparing Auteuil's film to Pagnol's is unfair and that the new movie should be judged on its own merits. Seen on its own, Auteuil's film is a pleasant but unexceptional heritage film, a quaint melodrama that has its moments but lacks overall emotional punch. Auteuil is now remaking Marius, Fanny and César. As the trilogy is Pagnol's best-known and best-loved series of films, this will be an even taller order.

Ginette Vincendeau

CREDITS

Produced by

Alain Sarde Jerôme Seydoux Adaptation

Daniel Auteuil Based on the novel La Fille du puisatier by Marcel Pagnol

Director of Photography an-François Robin Editor

Joelle Hache Art Director Bernard Vezat
Original Music

Alexandre Desplat Sound Henri Morelle Jean Goudier Thomas Gauder Costume Designer

Pierre-Yves Gavraud @A.S. Films, Zack Films.

Pathé Production, TF1 Films Production Production

Companies Alain Sarde and Jerôme Seydoux present a coproduction of A.S. Films/Zack Films/ Pathé/TF1 Films Production with the participation of Canal+ and CinéCinéma in association with Banque Postale Image 4, Cofimage 22, Uniétoile 8, Banque Populaire Image 11, Cinémage 5

With the support of

Côte d'Azur

Région Provence Alpes

CAST

Daniel Auteuil Pascal Amoretti the well

digger Kad Merad Félipe Rambert Sabine Azema Madame Mazel Jean-Pierre Darroussin Nicolas Duvauchelle Jacques Mazel
Astrid Bergès-Frisbey Patricia Amoretti Emilie Cazenave

Amanda Marie-Anne Chazel Coline Bosso Chloé Malardé

Brune Coustellie Ilona Porte

Dolby Digital/DTS T1.85:11

Distributor Pathé Distribution

9.813 ft + 0 frames

French theatrical title La Fille du puisatier

SYNOPSIS Provence, France, just before World War II. Patricia lives with her four younger sisters and her widowed father, the well-digger Pascal Amoretti. She has a brief affair with Jacques Mazel, a rich young pilot. War is declared, Jacques is sent to the Front and Patricia finds herself pregnant. She turns down a marriage offer from Félipe, her father's assistant who is in love with her. On learning of the pregnancy, Amoretti seeks out the Mazels, who callously dismiss him and his daughter as potential blackmailers. Amoretti banishes Patricia for disgracing the family, and sends her to his sister, herself a 'fallen' woman. When a son is born, he forgives Patricia, and she returns home with the child. Jacques is said to have died in combat and his parents now welcome Patricia and the baby; the families are reconciled. Jacques miraculously returns from the war. He marries Patricia; Félipe marries her sister Amanda.

Wreckers

United Kingdom 2010 Director: D R Hood

D.R. Hood's debut feature Wreckers doesn't let its obvious financial constraints stand in the way of its ambitions, but promises more than it can actually deliver, its dramatic plausibility continually undermined by a script that's by turns pedestrian and overwrought, and flat, uninspired direction. Its tale of a young married couple, recently moved from the city to a village in the Fens where the husband David (Benedict Cumberbatch) endured a torrid upbringing, links several classic elements - the husbandstranger who gradually reveals a darker side, the flaring up of dormant sibling rivalry, the secrets and lies in a small community – but there are two principal catalysts igniting the drama: the wife Dawn's (Claire Foy) desire for a child, and the sudden irruption of David's profoundly damaged soldier brother Nick into the couple's domestic idyll (a not entirely convincing performance by Shaun Evans).

That toxic family history has also affected the seemingly sanguine David, his habitual lies gradually revealed as pressure is applied. Hood has the courage to leave things often unspoken, to not be too specific about the siblings' past, but the downside of that is a fuzziness, a superficiality in the treatment of their characters. That's most apparent in the film's final third, when the script crams in too much incident and revelation (a slightly ridiculous barbecue scene kickstarting it all), leaving no time to dwell or construct more nuanced psychologies. Nick is finally left dangling, who knows where; it feels

CREDITS

Produced by Simon Onwurah Written by D R Hood Director of Photography Annemarie Lean-Vercoe

Editor Claire Pringle **Production Designer** Beck Rainford Original Music

Sound Recordist Ben Collinson Costume Designer Rebecca Gore

©Wreckers Limited Production Companies A Likely Story and Non-Aligned Films production

Executive Producers

Olivier Lauchenauer

Brian Eagles

CAST Claire Foy Benedict Cumberbatch

David Shaun Evans Peter McDonald Garv Sinead Matthews

Sharon June Watson Miss Hedges



Blood brother: Benedict Cumberbatch

less like a calculated decision and more as if the filmmakers - like Dawn and David themselves - didn't know quite what to do with his disruptive energies.

The main stumbling block though is the character of Dawn, one of life's watchers when the film really needed someone less passive and insipid. Cleaving to Dawn's point of view throughout undermines credibility badly in two scenes in particular. Some kind of nadir is reached when Nick tells her, "He [David] fucks you but he loves me." We could be generous and see that as the demented outpourings of an unravelling mind - or alternatively the inability of the scriptwriter to rise to the occasion. That said, a nice irony is finessed at the end, David seemingly compelled to live with a much bigger lie than any he's constructed hitherto.

Kieron Corless

In Colour [1.85:1]

Distributor Artificial Eve Film

SYNOPSIS UK, the present. Young married couple Dawn and David have moved to the village where David grew up, and plan to start a family, but Dawn is experiencing problems getting pregnant. David's younger brother Nick, a soldier, pays a surprise visit and ends up staying with them. Nick is emotionally damaged both by his experiences as a soldier – he watched a friend die – and by the brothers' difficult upbringing. David tells Dawn that Nick pushed their mother downstairs when he was a teenager. Nick and Dawn become closer, watched over jealously by David. Nick and David argue, and finally David suggests that Nick leave. Dawn sees Nick having sex with Sharon, a married woman from the village. Sharon's husband Gary makes a pass at Dawn. David confesses that he isn't able to have children, to Dawn's consternation. David becomes angrier and more violent during their arguments. Gary visits Dawn when David is out and they have sex. At a barbecue, Dawn overhears Nick saying that David told him she can't have children. Nick and Gary fight, then David and Nick – the latter tells Dawn it was David who pushed their mother down the stairs. David claims he was protecting Nick from their mother. Nick goes missing, but Dawn finds him in the abandoned farmhouse where the brothers grew up, in great distress. Dawn is pregnant, and David tells her he wants the child, despite it not being his. When the baby is born, the couple bump into Gary.

CREDITS UPDATE

DECEMBER 2011

THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN THE SECRET OF THE UNICORN

. USA/New Zealand 2011 ©DW Studios, L.L.C. and Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc

Production Companies

Paramount Pictures and Columbia Pictures present in association with Hemisphere Media Capital an Amblin Entertainment/Wingnut Films production, a Kennedy/Marshall production, a Steven Spielberg film

With the participation of the New Zealand Large Budget Screen Production Grant Nickelodeon Mov

Supervising Art Director Sound Design

Dave Whiteh US theatrical title

The Adventures of Tintin

THE RUM DIARY

p.72 USA 2010 ©GK Films, LLC
Executive Producer

Patrick McCormick

Production Sound Mixer

Costume Designer

Dolby Digital/DTS/

SDDS Prints by [1.85:1]

BATTLE OF WARSAW 1920

p. 56 ©Zodiak Jerzy Hoffman Film Production

Film Extracts

All Quiet on the Western Front (1930) October/ Oktiabr (1928)

FUTURE, THE

p. 63 Germany/USA/France/United Kingdom

REAL STEEL p. 70 . USA/India

STRAW DOGS

the distributor is Sony Pictures Releasing

THIS OUR STILL LIFE **p.78** Part-subtitled

NOVEMBER 2011

SLEEPING BEAUTY

101m 27s 9,130 ft +8 frames

WILL p.80

101m 57s 9,175 ft +8 frames

THE WOMAN

p. 80 18

101m 19s 9.118 ft +8 frames

THE YELLOW SEA

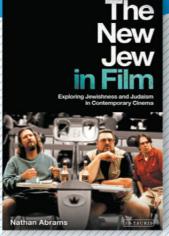
South Korea/Hong Kong The character called Myun-Ga in the synopsis should have been called Myun Jung-hak

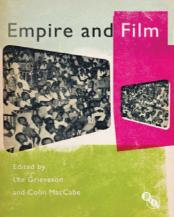
TYRANNOSAUR

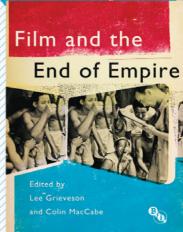
p.75 United Kingdom/ Finland/Australia











New Argentine Cinema

By Jens Andermann, I.B. Tauris, 232pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781848854635 Studying films by Lisandro Alonso, Albertina Carri, Lucrecia Martel, Raúl Perrone, Martín Rejtman and Pablo Trapero, among others, Jens Anderman

Trapero, among others, Jens Andermann identifies a shift in aesthetic sensibilities between these directors and those of the previous generation, as well as a profound change in the way films are being made and their relation to the audiovisual field at large. In combining close comparative analyses with a review of the changing models of production, editing, actorship and location, Andermann uncovers the ways in which Argentine films have managed to construct a complex, multilayered account of their own present, as shot through - or 'perforated' - by the still unresolved legacies of the past.

www.ibtauris.com

The New Jew in Film: Exploring Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Cinema

By Nathan Abrams, I.B. Tauris, 272pp, paperback £14.99, ISBN 9781848855755

With a new generation of Jewish filmmakers, writers and actors at work. contemporary cinemas in Hollywood and the rest of the world have been depicting a multiplicity of new Jews, including tough Jews, brutish Jews, gay and lesbian Jews, Jewish cowboys, skinheads and superheroes, Jews in space and so on. Grounded in the study of over 300 films from Hollywood and beyond, The New Jew in Film explores these new and changing depictions of Jews, Jewishness and Judaism, providing a wider, more representative picture of the subject than has hitherto been attempted.

www.ibtauris.com

Empire and Film

Edited by Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe, Cultural Histories of Cinema series, Palgrave Macmillan/BFI Publishing, 304pp, paperback, £18.99, ISBN 9781844574216

Empire and Film explores the relationship between cinema and colonialism, focusing on how film was used by the British to sustain and develop their empire in the early 20th century. Featuring richly illustrated images from the BFI National Archive and contributions from international scholars, the book covers the period stretching from the emergence of cinema at the height of imperialism to moments of decolonisation and the ending of formal imperialism after the Second World War. It is published in conjunction with www.colonialfilm.org.uk, a major website providing digitised archival films and materials relating to British colonial cinema

www.palgrave.com/bfi

Film and the End of Empire

Edited by Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe, Cultural Histories of Cinema series, Palgrave Macmillan/BFI Publishing, 320pp, paperback, £18.99, ISBN 9781844574230

In this volume of original essays, international scholars explore the fascinating story of how cinema was used to sustain colonialism in the mid-20th century and also to register the changes of decolonisation and facilitate a new global order of things. This book is richly illustrated with images from the BFI National Archive. It is published in conjunction with www.colonialfilm.org.uk, a major website providing digitised archival films and materials relating to British colonial cinema.

www.palgrave.com/bfi

CLOSE UP

Cinema's lost language

Miklós Jancsó's 'musicals' use songs, crowds and landscape to express social struggle, writes **Jonathan Romney**

Red Psalm

Miklós Jancsó; Hungary 1971; Second Run/Region 2 DVD; 82 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1/16.9 anamorphic; Features: Jancsó documentary 'Message of Stones – Hegyalja' (1994), booklet

The Miklós Jancsó Collection

My Way Home/The Round-Up/ The Red and the White

Hungary 1964/65/67; Second Run/ Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 264 minutes total; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 anamorphic; Features: short films, director interview, essays

If I think of socialist musicals, two immediately come to mind: Miklós Jancsó's 'Red Psalm' and Jacques Demy's 'Une chambre en ville'. It might seem facetious to compare these two directors. since Jancsó is generally associated with 1960s/1970s cinema at its most serious, while Demy is often considered the epitome of all that is frothy and Hollywoodian in France. This is, at the very least, to underrate the seriousness and toughness of Demy's 1982 film, about a strike in Nantes - but my point is that both filmmakers are distinguished by their use of music as a primary element and by their innovative use of crowds and landscapes. Both organise huge numbers of people - actors, singers, dancers in extensive open-air spaces which they use as quasi-theatrical 'stages'. Demy uses real towns, as in 'Les Demoiselles de Rochefort' (an extraordinary case of urban space invaded by a cinema event), while Jancsó uses the country, whether it's the more restricted fields of 'Red Psalm' or the vast expanses of 'The Red and the White' (1967), in which the reversals of war are enacted with masses of players, human and animal, using hills and valleys as a giant chessboard.

It might seem flippant to call 'Red Psalm' a 'musical' so let's describe it more specifically as a Brechtian lesson in history and politics, using folk songs and other sound materials to offer a polyphonic demonstration of the trials of social unrest. With its 1,500 extras, 'Red Psalm' is, if you prefer, a pageant, a ritualistic enactment of revolutionary events - not specific but archetypal ones, though the action is understood to refer generally to rural uprisings that took place in Hungary between 1890 and 1910, 'Red Psalm' is the accepted international title, although the Hungarian title ('Még kér a nép') means 'The People Still Demand', a quotation from the poet-revolutionary Sándor Petofi. Either title works. The original refers to the persistence of



Political movement: 'Red Psalm'

'Red Psalm' is a pageant, a ritualistic enactment of revolutionary events

popular demands despite all obstacles: the film culminates with an insurgent crowd gunned down by troops, after a militant announces that the fruit of popular struggle will come not yet, but later. But 'Red Psalm' works too, declaring that the film is a visual cantata to social change.

Raymond Durgnat saw 'Red Psalm' as belonging to what he called the "intellectual-symbolic" cinema of the 1960s, a cinema that today seems like a lost language, an aborted possibility. Durgnat defines this cinema as "films which pursue a line of argument, or thought, or description", citing such diverse titles as 'Les Carabiniers' (1963), 'Culloden' (1964) and 'Oh! What a Lovely War' (1969). Jancsó certainly belongs to a school of symbolic cinema; in its use of motifs from political, religious and folk iconography (the red imagery alone includes streamers, flowers, rosettes.

leaves, a bloody river), 'Red Psalm' is perhaps closest to Paradjanov.
Jancsó's use of quasi-ritual movements performed in landscapes and shot in daringly long takes is close too to Theo Angelopoulos (he was also, for this very reason, a massive influence on Béla Tarr). It's impossible moreover to think of 'Red Psalm' outside the context of post-Brechtian 1960s/1970s theatre – including John Arden, diverse American happenings and Robert Wilson's vast outdoor stagings.

'Red Psalm' offers a dizzying vortex of action and information. Within the flow of the work, abrupt breaks and shifts occur. Songs in a variety of folk modes start, only to break off or be interrupted by other music, or by concrete sound effects (bells, cracking whips). Among the masses on screen, several groups emerge: soldiers, landowners and their agents, farmworkers, three young women who periodically strip off to resemble the Graces. Among them, a few individuals make a mark, but only a handful are given names. Events flare up with startling brutality: a maypole dance becomes a massacre, a church is burned down with its priest inside. Within the swirl of choreographed action, the camera periodically stops to pick out details: faces and bodies in the closing survey of the slaughtered; close-ups of hands, a white dove; a still life of country food. Jancsó planned his choreography and camera movements on location, resulting in a restless immediacy, the camera caught up in the whirl as inquiring observer and as participant. Similarly, Jancsó offers us a mass of contrasting, contradictory arguments, texts and songs - revolutionary chants, a landowner expounding the laws of supply and demand, a letter from Friedrich Engels.

'Red Psalm' represents a form of cinema that seems unsettlingly, excitingly alien to us today. But if one thing marks it as a film of its period, it is – more than the politics – the use of female nudity, for which Jancsó was attacked for cynicism by the communist authorities. Nothing in 'Red Psalm' seems so much of its era as its three naked women representing the unabashed spirit of the people: it now seems transparently a modish 1960s/1970s instance of sex selling politics – cheesecake in the service of the revolution.

This DVD release sees the intensity of the film's colours magnificently restored. Three other titles - 'My Way Home' (1964), 'The Round-Up' (1965) and 'The Red and the White' (1967) are being re-released by Second Run in a box-set to celebrate Jancsó's 90th birthday. It would be fascinating to investigate his later films, to discover what happened after his fall from international favour in the 1970s - for example, his recent spate of domestically popular comedies. Even to rediscover these four films, though, is like seeing the turrets of a long-lost city emerge from underwater.



Symbolic cinema: 'The Round-Up'

NEW RELEASES

Cannibal Holocaust

Ruggero Deodato; Italy 1980; Shameless Screen Entertainment/Region-free Bluray; Certificate 18; 92 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (16:9); Features: presented in two cuts, featurettes, trailers

Film: One of the more gruelling 'video nasties', Cannibal Holocaust is the definitive example of the Italian cannibal film, a subgenre of horroradventure exploitation films made in the late 1970s and early 1980s which depict 'civilised' European adventurers falling prey to the 'savage', primitive peoples of the South American rainforests. Like the Mondo shockumentaries that came before them, cannibal films offer up a lurid combination of sex, violence and far-off locations, often purporting to be based on true events and notoriously employing scenes of genuine animal cruelty for sensationalist effect.

Cannibal Holocaust follows an expedition, led by Professor Harold Monroe (Robert Kerman), to the Amazon Basin in search of a missing American documentary film crew. Unable to find the filmmakers, Monroe nevertheless recovers several unopened film cans from the native tribes. Returning to New York, he surveys the found footage, which catalogues a series of atrocities perpetrated by the film crew on the local tribespeople, and the subsequent cannibalistic revenge the natives take. "I wonder who the real cannibals are? Monroe muses as the end credits roll, but it's hard to take Cannibal Holocaust's anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist message seriously after the unremitting sensationalism and brutality of the proceeding 90 minutes. Extended scenes of rape, heads smashed in with rocks, a real giant turtle beheaded – Cannibal Holocaust revels in the atrocities it professes to condemn. However, although impudently dishonest, Holocaust is also an undeniably affecting and technically accomplished film which sees director Ruggero Deodato, a former assistant to Roberto Rossellini, employing the realist aesthetic to considerable dramatic effect in the carefully constructed chaos of the 'found footage' scenes. Disc: Shameless's new Blu-ray

presentation looks exceptional. The film is presented in two cuts: a new 'director's edit', which sees much of the animal cruelty obscured or removed, and a more complete version which restores all the animal cruelty save 15 seconds showing a small mammal being killed with a knife in close-up. This represents a considerable volte-face by the BBFC who, when the film was previously submitted in 2001, required five minutes and 44 seconds of cuts to remove sexual violence and cruelty to animals. The rationale for restoring the other scenes is that the animals are "killed swiftly and cleanly", with the BBFC even going so far as to make Cannibal Holocaust a case study on it website where it states: "The decision to cut



French Cancan A homage to the pastel palette of Renoir's painter father, a paean to showbusiness – and a slyly patriotic celebration of Frenchness

these scenes in 2001 was primarily the result of the disgusting nature of the sequences, as well as the history of the film as a DPP-listed 'video nasty', rather than the result of a strict application of policy." (JB)

Daytime Drinking

Noh Young-Seok; South Korea 2008; Inclusionism/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 111 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: interviews with Noh Young-Seok, deleted scenes, trailer, music video

Film: Noh Young-Seok's debut feature, made with \$10,000 which he claimed to have borrowed from his mother, is a whimsical but charming road movie.

Having recently broken up with his girlfriend, lead character Hyuk-Jin (Song Sam-Dong) gets drunk with his friends and agrees to their suggestion of a trip to the remote province of Gangwon-do—the only hitch is that when he arrives at

Auteur filmmaking:

'Hammett'

his destination, he finds that his friends have stood him up. The inspiration for the film comes from an old Korean saying: "If you drink during the day, you will be too drunk by the evening to recognise your parents." Noh's story bears this out, showing the protagonist at one stage alone on the highway, hungover and wearing nothing but his underpants. There is a surreal element to his lonely, drink-accompanied journey through the Korean hinterland. The further he ventures from Seoul, the more disoriented he becomes and the stranger and more random his encounters. "It's so romantic... a journey without a destination," one character muses when she hears of his plans. She's right – up to a point. The travels here are as much an exercise in humiliation and bewilderment as they are in enlightenment or romance. Disc: Since the demise of Tartan, there has been a marked decrease in the number of Asian films released on DVD in the UK. It's therefore heartening to see Inclusionism ready to pick up a

has been a marked decrease in the number of Asian films released on DVD in the UK. It's therefore heartening to see Inclusionism ready to pick up a festival favourite like *Daytime Drinking*. This well-packaged edition includes interviews with the director (whose enthusiasm for drinking seems to match that of his central character) as well as deleted scenes and a trailer. (GM)

French Cancan

Jean Renoir; France/Italy 1954; BFI/ Region 2 DVD/Region B Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate PG; 104 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'The Show Must Go On! The Joys of Life by Jean Renoir' documentary, essay booklet

Film: There are several different kinds of cultural love-letter tucked into this exuberant musical, a film that Renoir seized with relish as a chance to reconnect with French audiences after his American wartime stint. Traditionally viewed as a nostalgic recreation

of the Montmartre of his childhood (vibrant three-strip Technicolor allows him to pay homage to the vivid pastel palette of his father, the post-impressionist painter Pierre Auguste) and a paean to showbusiness, it's also a slyly patriotic celebration of Frenchness – one centred in the Belle Epoque's art and sexual tolerance, and in its uproarious and newly egalitarian entertainments such as the Moulin Rouge cabaret, whose bumpy creation it follows.

Wedded to the idea of the importance of an artist's work to his public, Jean Gabin's stage producer Henri Danglard is Renoir's surrogate – visibly so when he makes his explosive defence of theatre as a vocation, as his cancan protégée Nini balks at its emotional price. Not only the second high point of Renoir's career, it's also Gabin's, his wily, stoical performance echoing Touchez pas au grish's theme of the old timer with one last trick up his sleeve.

Within its lively comedy, the film turns a mature eye on the frailties of human nature (heroine Nini is tangled in the famous Renoirian set-up of the ménage à quatre described by Truffaut) in a way that would have been unthinkable in a Hollywood musical of the same era. But it does so with a lightness and generosity that's all of a piece with its hearty appetite for life. The film jumps with an enviable energy, not just in the famously kinetic 20-minute cancan scene that closes it, but in a crackle coursing throughout, from María Félix's high-octane tantrums as diva Lola to the scuffling laundress whose riposte to a badly pleated blouse is, "How's the pleat in your backside?" Disc: A treat of a transfer, with remarkably true and stable colour (right down to the candyfloss pink pillars of the Moulin Rouge). The authoritative documentary that accompanies it gives an excellent if anecdote-heavy history of the film's production. (KS)

Hammett

Wim Wenders; US 1982; StudioCanal/ Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 94 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Film: This was a famously troubled production, made at Coppola's Zoetrope Studios. As Peter Cowie's biography of Coppola reveals, the production was closed down in 1980; it was eventually extensively reshot and finally surfaced to a very muted response at the Cannes Festival in 1982.

What Wenders's film utterly lacks is the hardboiled quality and narrative zip of Dashiell Hammett's fiction. The attempt to combine a portrait of the writer with a mystery romance akin to something found in one of his novels doesn't work – there are just too many shots of typewriter ribbons! The colour and studio sets add to the stylised feel of the filmmaking, and we're always too aware that we're on a sound stage.

The film is caught in a netherworld between pastiche, homage and real crime drama. The constant references to *Chinatown* can't help but provoke

NEW RELEASES

unflattering comparisons with Roman Polanski's 1930s-set noir, while the more kitsch moments are in the vein of Warren Beatty's Dick Tracy (1990).

But there are compensations: John Barry's music lends an air of mystery and seediness to proceedings, and it is intriguing to see R.G. Armstrong, better known for playing belligerent, God-fearing sadists in Sam Peckinpah westerns, in a detective movie. There's also a typically feisty cameo from Sam Fuller. And while Frederic Forrest may not have the sardonic snap of a Humphrey Bogart in The Maltese Falcon(1941), he lends gravitas and melancholy to his portrayal of the writer. Certain scenes are very effective - for example when we see Hammett confronting a group of elderly powerbrokers (led by British character actor Roy Kinnear) with photographs of their misdeeds with underage prostitutes. The filmmakers throw in some spirited chase sequences and plenty of loaded dialogue, and the production and costume design is vivid and extraordinarily detailed. **Disc:** There's the choice of watching with German subtitles but no extras beyond that - nor are there any hints about the film's tortuous gestation and the many battles fought behind the scenes during its making. The transfer is fine, though. (GM)

Films by Imamura Shohei

A Man Vanishes

Japan 1967; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/ Region 2 NTSC DVD; 129 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: Tony Rayns introduction, Imamura interview, trailer, booklet

The Ballad of Narayama

Japan 1983; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/ Region 2 NTSC DVD/Region B Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 15; 130 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: Tony Rayns introduction, multiple trailers, booklet

Films: Released separately, the fifth and sixth instalments of Masters of Cinema's ongoing survey (a double-bill of The Insect Woman and Nishi Ginza Station will soon tot things up to eight) catch Imamura at markedly different stages of his creative development. A Man Vanishes, his first collaboration with Japan's legendary Art Theatre Guild, began life as a seemingly straightforward investigative documentary about what was at the time the highly topical subject of men disappearing for no apparent reason but when it became clear that the invisible protagonist of their film was unlikely to reappear, Imamura turned his attention to the women left behind. The combination of simple interviewdriven reportage and hidden-camera



East meets west: 'Leningrad Cowboys Go America'

discoveries coupled with material nudging outright fiction proved highly controversial at the time (Oshima Nagisa vehemently denounced this technique in a contemporary article, reprinted in the booklet), and it's easy to see why Imamura never again attempted anything similar: he himself confessed to considerable misgivings about what he was doing, not least when he started exploiting the fondness that one of the women felt for his cameraman. But as a flawed one-off, it's something of a milestone.

The achievement of The Ballad of Narayama is more straightforward, not least the fact that it led to the first of Imamura's two Cannes Palmes d'Or. Based on the same literary source as Keisuke Kinoshita's hyperstylised kabuki-influenced 1958 film, Imamura's earthily realistic treatment is radically different. The mountain villagers who compel their elders to die on the freezing slopes of Narayama when they reach the traditional three-score-and-ten live in an environment so far removed from conventional civilisation that they've evolved their own moral codes. Unwanted children are sold or abandoned, fearsome penalties are imposed on those who disrespect the scarcity of vital resources, while al fresco copulation, excretion and even bestiality are seen as acceptable by-products of a system of extreme population control. Discs: The Blu-ray transfer of Narayama doesn't quite hit the heights of the same label's Profound Desires of the Gods but it's an unrecognisable improvement on previous video releases - as is the accompanying DVD. The DVD-only A Man Vanishes is more problematic: the grainy black-and-white picture suits the content but it's easy to see why it wasn't given a Blu-ray upgrade, and a note at the start highlights technical flaws inherent in the original materials. Both packages are superbly contextualised via video introductions from Tony Rayns, interviews with Imamura and the usual packed booklets. (MB)

Aki Kaurismäki's Leningrad Cowboys

Leningrad Cowboys Go America/ Leningrad Cowboys Meet Moses/ Total Balalaika Show

Aki Kaurismäki; Finland/Sweden/ Germany/France 1989/94/94; Criterion/ Eclipse/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 79/94/57 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 anamorphic; Features: five shorts ('Rocky VI,' 'Thru the Wire', 'L.A. Woman', 'Those Were the Days', 'These Boots'), introductory essays

Films: Compiling all eight of Aki Kaurismäki's collaborations (two features, five shorts, an hour-long concert) with the ludicrously bequiffed Finnish rrrock 'n' rrrollers, this box-set is also a time capsule, capturing not only the now long-distant era when Kaurismäki vied with Michael Winterbottom for productivity, but also the cultural shifts that accompanied the period when the Iron Curtain was being sold off for scrap metal and the Soviet empire went out with a whimper.

The features form a diptych that traces the Leningrad Cowboys' hapless trip to America and their less than triumphant return to Europe. Although their fearsome manager Vladimir and the Bible-thumping prophet Moses (both played by the late Matti Pellonpää, who gets most of the laughs) try to steer them in a narratively compelling direction, the films are rambling affairs, with more in common than their divergent reputations suggest. Indeed, the much derided sequel often has better gags (a visual joke involving Moses and a swimming pool is especially delectable) and more pointed satirical commentary, though the theft of the Statue of Liberty's nose seems to have no function other than to let Kaurismäki cast regular French collaborator André Wilms as a wildly implausible CIA investigator. Through Kaurismäki's eves, the dilapidated urban and rural landscapes of the United States Mexico and assorted European countries have



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Screen

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REDISCOVERY

far more in common than otherwise, their inhabitants reacting to the arrival of these eccentric outsiders with the same nonchalant indifference.

By contrast, the purely musical films are an unqualified delight, offering a Stallone parody (Rocky VI), a potted history of mid-20th-century Finland (These Boots) and a quasi-religious parable about a man and a donkey (Those Were the Days) as well as a record of the hysterical collaboration between the Leningrad Cowboys and the Alexandrov Red Army Choir. Total Balalaika Show records them taking over Helsinki's Senate Square to play for a crowd of 70,000 people to demonstrate musical solidarity between Russia and Finland, countries sharing an 833-mile border. It's an irresistible confection that fuses Russian standards ('Volga Boatmen', 'Kalinka') with bastardised rock 'n' roll, the jaw-dropping mash-up of ZZ Top's 'Gimme All Your Lovin', the Soviet national anthem and the 'Hallelujah Chorus' being the musical and comedic high point.

Discs: Transfers are up to Criterion's usual high standard, and the NTSC encoding means that the music is now played at the correct pitch—unlike Artificial Eye's otherwise identical 2007 package. (MB)

The Last Run

Richard Fleischer; US 1971; Warner On-Demand/Region 1 DVD; 95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Film: George C. Scott was en route to winning and rejecting the Academy Award for Patton when The Last Run began filming on the Iberian Peninsula in the winter of 1971. He already had some weight to throw around, and all accounts reveal the actor to have been a force in changing the film's director not once but twice - replacing John Boorman with John Huston, then Huston with Richard Fleischer (backed by screenwriter Alan Sharp, protecting his terse, funny script). Scott also replaced leading lady Tina Aumont with Trish Van Devere and, after shooting, his then wife Colleen Dewhurst (who appears in The Last Run as a melancholy Portuguese whore) with Van Devere.

With all these musical chairs, it seems obvious that *The Last Run* would turn out to be a bit of a mess, and the contemporary reviews reflect this fact. The problem is that those reviews were reacting to *Variety* scuttlebutt, and not to what was on screen – which today looks like further cause for the reappraisal of Fleischer, the multi-tool genius of the *noir*-courtroom-submarine-Viking movie (considering the film's history, the overall visual tone is remarkably consistent, with sombre nocturnal photography by Sven Nykvist in an early non-Scandinavian outing).

Scott plays expat American Harry Garmes, a former getaway wheelman now retired to the Portuguese coast. Garmes is haunted by a dead son and an unfaithful, departed wife ("Said she was going to Switzerland to have her breasts lifted. I thought she meant by surgery"), so he's not got much to win or lose by

Party animals

Kim Newman revisits the 1970s student satire that gave British cinema one of its most memorable human monsters

Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs

Stuart Cooper; UK 1974; BFI Flipside/ Region 2 DVD/Region B Blu-ray Dual Format; Certificate 15; 111 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: 'Put Yourself in My Place', 'The Contraption', original trailer, booklet

Stirring from a cocoon-like bed in a dilapidated student flat, just-expelled Malcolm Scrawdyke (John Hurt) caps off a long soliloquy with, "It's no use just theorising about getting up - it's the act that counts." Gathering his two staunchest (only) disciples, Wick Blagdon (John McEnery), a born number-two man, and Irwin Ingham (Raymond Platt), seemingly invited along because he can whip up a decent agit-prop phallus design for the poster, Malcolm founds the Party of Dynamic Erection, which extends to hapless, duffle-coated fellow traveller Dennis Charles Nipple (David Warner), destined to be the first purge victim. This faction, essentially fascist but a caricature of scruffy student radicalism in all varieties, has the long-term aim of sweeping Malcolm into a position of dictatorial power which he vows to exercise capriciously. "What will we do about the Bomb?" asks Wick, his only confidant, only to be told, "Drop it, of course." The immediate goal of the DEP is a plot against the unseen arch-enemy Phillip Allard, the lecturer who kicked Malcolm out of art school, Loitering on the fringes is Ann Gedge (Rosalind Ayres), a fellow student whom Malcolm impotently likes but scorns - and whose harsh criticisms bring about the climactic violence which shows the would-be führer in his true colours.

With his all-weather overcoat and his scraggle of facial hair, seemingly sprouting everywhere but on his chin, Hurt's Malcolm is one of the great human monsters of British cinema, a malign successor to 1960s working-class dreamers like Tom Courtenay's Billy Liar and David Warner's Morgan, and undeniable forerunner of articulate. embittered, self-destructive outsiders such as Richard E. Grant's Withnail and David Thewlis's Johnny in Mike Leigh's 'Naked'. Playwright David Halliwell originally wrote the part for himself (Leigh directed the first, five-hour production) before Hurt played it in 1966, in a production that closed quickly but not before George Harrison had seen it and admired it. It was Harrison who later financed the making of the film.

Halliwell was an interesting, unprolific writer in several media: his postmodern



In the hood: David Warner in 'Little Malcolm and His Struggle Against the Eunuchs'

The climactic violence shows the would-be führer in his true colours

'Rashomon'-like ghost story 'Meriel, the Ghost Girl' (for the 1976 TV series 'The Mind Beyond') is an unknown masterpiece, but he also scripted episodes of 'Crown Court' and 'The Bill', presumably in fits of self-loathing. 'Little Malcolm', like the lead character, is unlikeable but curiously memorable.

Hurt, producers Harrison and Gavrik Losey, screenwriter Derek Woodward and director Stuart Cooper were compelled to put together this film version, shot in chilly Oldham in a disused gasworks ("Terrible place, that gasworks - if that's what the place does to young mystics they ought to put a screen around it") with few concessions to realism. Speeches run on like demented party pieces, with Hurt fulminating non-stop and Warner spinning out a bizarre fantasy of an encounter in which Nipple trousers tucked into socks that serve as bicycle clips, hood always up in a manner once seen as silly rather than threatening presents himself as an erotic dynamo.

Halliwell's well-worn theme is male sexual and social inadequacy (his original title was 'One Long Wank'), which lends the doings of these layabout students some of the grotesque frenzy of Dr Strangelove's impotent world-enders (John Alcott, who shot the similarly snowy, bleak 'The Shining', photographed the film, which also has echoes of 'A Clockwork Orange'). The major acts of the DEP are a rehearsal for

the kidnapping and humiliation of Allard (who is to be forced to smash a Stanley Spencer painting), a role-play assumption of power that turns into a childish snowball fight as Nipple plays the irritating part of would-be assassin, and a show trial in which the supposed traitor is given the choice of pleading "guilty or very guilty" and is genuinely shocked at the realisation that Malcolm is capable of condemning one of his only three friends to death. Ayres (Elsa Lanchester in 'Gods and Monsters') is the sole female voice, a pointedly critical presence whose character is a playwright's convenience. In the finale, Ann suffers a single violent act usually reserved for male movie characters (a kick in the crotch), which breaks the spell Malcolm casts over his few remaining minions and leads to a literal freeze-frame finish. It's a moment that still shocks, definitively estranging us from any possible perverse enjoyment of this fractured little faction's posturing - they may be ridiculous, but the only reason they aren't really terrifying is that they're so inept they have little hope of getting anything done outside the pub. The woman's role in the piece is up for debate: does Halliwell's use of Ann endorse or critique Malcolm's inability to connect with her?

The BFI Flipside's now traditional superb transfer is complemented by two well-chosen, intriguing short subjects (Francine Winham's 'Put Yourself in My Place' and James Dearden's 'The Contraption') and a booklet featuring contextualising pieces by Yvonne Tasker, Alan Strachan, Gordon Gow, Robert Murphy, Mike Leigh and John Hurt as well as an interview with Stuart Cooper.

NOZONE

A feast of film

Tim Lucas relishes the colours, the costumes and the camp of Maria Montez and Jon Hall's melodramatic collaborations

Arabian Nights

John Rawlins; US 1942; Universal Cinema Classics/Region 1 DVD; 87 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: trailer, Robert Osborne introduction

Cobra Woman

Robert Siodmak; US 1943; Universal Vault Series/Region 1 DVD; 68 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1

Always a poor cousin among Hollywood's major motion-picture studios, Universal haven of horror pictures and the most heavily accented actors still finding work in the sound era – surprisingly did not undertake a production in three-strip Technicolor until 1942, a full decade after the process was introduced. When they did, they lavished it on the opening salvo of independent producer Walter Wanger's new exclusive studio contract, an eyepoppingly pretty grab-bag of real and paste jewels loosely based on the stories of 'The Thousand and One Nights' - and by 'loosely' I mean casting Shemp Howard as Sinbad the Sailor and putting him nowhere near a ship. The film was reputedly inspired by the success of Michael Powell's 'The Thief of Bagdad' (1940), whose spirited young star Sabu was recruited for a supporting role that feels more like one-third of the lead. However, the real star of 'Arabian Nights' was Maria Montez, a young (30, but claiming to be 22) Dominican Republic native with a haughty demeanour, a frequently unintelligible voice and a tendency to be doubled in her dance numbers, whose ravishing auburn hair and lack of aversion to sheer garments led to her being dubbed 'the Queen of Technicolor'. Montez died in 1951, not yet 40, after suffering a heart attack in her bath, but during her short reign at Universal she presided over half a dozen colourful costume melodramas opposite Jon Hall, a not-half-so-exotic leading man who had broken out as the faux native hero of John Ford's 'The Hurricane' (1937).

'Arabian Nights' stars Montez as Scheherazade (simplified to 'Sherazade' in the credits), a common dancing girl in a Middle Eastern vaudeville show who believes it's her destiny some day to rule as queen. The beloved Persian ruler Haroun al-Rashid (Hall), overthrown by his evil brother Kamar (Leif Erickson) and presumed dead, is overcome with love for the status-seeking hootchie-coocher and works with the assistance of acrobat Ali Ben Ali (Sabu) to recover his throne so that he may lavish upon her all destiny has promised. Of course, Kamar wants her too and has his kingdom ready to offer, so our heroine must first surrender



High camp: 'Cobra Woman'

her dreams, out of love for Haroun, who seemingly has nothing, in order to obtain them. This was the biggest picture in the career of director John Rawlins (within five years he was back to helming the likes of 'Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome'), and the efforts of his crew resulted in four Academy Award nominations for cinematography, musical score, sound and art direction. Matte paintings place the Taj Mahal in Persia, and outdoor bazaars are superimposed in the midst of outdoor scenery familiar from old westerns, but such geographic gibberish is balanced by having the likes of Thomas Gomez, John Qualen, Shemp Howard and Billy Gilbert cast as Arabs - not to mention Erickson, ominously built but powerless to invest a simple line like "Proceed" with the sleek menace of Conrad Veidt. For all its hambone silliness, 'Arabian Nights' is a fruit-basket feast of wardrobe, colour and perhaps the loveliest desert photography committed to film prior to 'Lawrence of Arabia'. Universal's budget-priced Cinema Classics release of this title, a few years old, can now be found at well below its original cost and is worth picking up as an invigorating balm for the eyes and a goosing of one's sense of the absurd.

Fans of the Montez/Hall pictures have been hungering for a full-course box-set, but only recently has the long wait since 'Arabian Nights' been followed by the duo's most notorious title, 'Cobra Woman' - the fourth in the run, skipping

Montez's ravishing auburn hair and lack of aversion to sheer garments led to her being dubbed 'the Queen of Technicolor' past 'White Savage' (1943, also with Sabu) and 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' (1944). It's not an encouraging sign that 'Cobra Woman' has bypassed general release in favour of disc-on-demand pressing, but the result is every bit as pleasing as the previous issue.

Scripted by Gene Lewis and Richard Brooks (who immediately went on to script 'The Killers' for director Robert Siodmak), 'Cobra Woman' seems to begin with its first couple of reels lopped off, offering no background about the story's jungle location or Hall's exotically named but otherwise American-seeming adventurer Ramu. He is preparing to wed Tollea (Montez), an orphaned beauty raised by the avuncular Father Paul (Samuel S. Hinds), when Hava (Lon Chaney Jr), a large mute feigning blindness, abducts her. The kidnapping has been ordered by the kindly, ageing queen of Cobra Island (Mary Nash), Tollea's mother, who wants her firstborn to reclaim her rightful rule of the island, presently under the tyranny of her evil twin Naja (Montez again), who placates the nearby volcano with human sacrifices selected during her zesty but strangely nightmarish and-you-and-you-and-you 'cobra dance'. Naturally Ramu pursues his beloved and initially mistakes Naja for her, introducing a romantic conflict that would have enriched the picture but is dropped almost immediately. The returning Sabu, endearing as always, tags along as Ramu's friend Kado.

Despite its faults, 'Cobra Woman' is hugely enjoyable as high camp, with Montez petulantly delivering densely accented lines ("I haff spucken!") that any other studio would have had the common sense to reloop, and delirious in its cha-cha-heeled pageantry. Burned to disc without so much as a menu, the film's 1.33:1 image is richly colourful, if a little soft.

NEW RELEASES

■ resurrecting his supercharged 1957
BMW 503 for one last job, smuggling
escaped con Paul Rickard (Tony
Musante) into France. Along the way
they pick up Musante's moll Claudie
(Van Devere), and Garmes becomes fond
enough of his charges to rescue them
from a set-up and keep them ahead of
would-be assassins – imagining himself
as a sort-of patriarch, but with
incestuous longings for the girl.

Rickard encourages Claudie to play up to Garmes's crush, to assure the driver's loyalty. And if Scott the man was thinking only of trading up wives, Scott the actor shows an extraordinary comprehension of an old man's crosscurrents of desire and insecurity before a pined-after younger woman — his wincing smile of surrender at the film's close might just break your heart. Disc: A handsome Panavision transfer, with a soundtrack tune-up highlighting the detailed under-the-hood audio.(NP)

The Nickel Ride/ 99 and 44/100% Dead

Robert Mulligan/John Frankenheimer; US 1974; Shout! Factory/Region 1; 99/98 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Film: What Shout! Factory has done here is to collect two little-seen organised-crime films of 1974, released in the shadows of the twin *Godfathers*.

99 and 44/100% Dead is a genre satire which offers little but proof of the degree to which director John Frankenheimer had sunk into an alcoholic morass by the mid-1970s. The zip-a-tone opening credits and rooty-tooty Henry Mancini score attempt enforced zaniness, but the edits are all a beat off, creating a dead-air quality. At best, star Richard Harris's 70s divorcée-meets-George Washington look is mildly amusing.

The low-key The Nickel Ride, conversely, is an extraordinary lost-between-thecracks movie about lost-between-thecracks lives. Jason Miller – the steepleeyebrowed Father Karras in The Exorcist – plays 'Keys' Cooper, a middle-aged mobster who for 19 years has been waking up earlier than everyone else to run his block in downtown Los Angeles. But as Cooper tries to line up a big new deal, his grip seems to be slipping "Lately you've been forgetting who you've been talking to," he has to remind an upstart driver played by Richard Evans, one of a host of perfect-fit character-actor mugs. Cooper suspects that his time's running out, sees usurpers waiting in the wings, and carries this knowledge like spiritual heartburn.

At the centre of the movie is the tense cat-and-mouse between gruff, wary Cooper and Bo Hopkins's Turner, a widegrinning self-described "born country talker" in floridly stitched denim who's just landed in town from Tulsa. John Hillerman's business-class higher-up has attached Turner to Cooper – though it's unclear if he's intended as Cooper's apprentice or his hitman.

Director Robert Mulligan, an observant teller of character-based stories whose horror of ostentation leaves him still waiting for his auteur cult. draws in detail the world of the

workaday criminal, the timecard crook who hustles so hard you wonder why he breaks the law at all. There are some perks: the film moves from brown, worn LA backrooms to Cooper's country cabin, an anti-cliché sylvan setting where Cooper's paranoia expands with his lungs, and where Mulligan can exercise the same gifts for anonymous outdoor anxiety that marked his sui generis western The Stalking Moon (1968).

Discs: A nice transfer brings out every shade of The Nickel Ride's Ashcan murk, showing the subtle mastery of Mulligan's mise en scène. (NP)

No Blade of Grass

Cornel Wilde; US/UK 1970; Warner On-Demand/Region 1 DVD; 95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Film: A beefcake Hungarian-American contract player for Fox from the 1940s through the mid-50s, Cornel Wilde finally went freelance with his own Theodora Productions. Its output included Joseph H. Lewis's *The Big Combo* and Wilde's own directorial outings, which began with 1955's *Storm Fear* and gradually ratcheted up the art-brut bedlam until this apotheosis, a loose adaptation of John Christopher's apocalyptic novel (more recently a Radio 4 serial).

"By the beginning of the 70s, man had brought the destruction of his environment close to the point of no return," intones Wilde, introducing a montage of belching smokestacks and pollution-dyed waterways at the top of No Blade of Grass — in which he'll bring the destruction of narrative to the same point. Next, a TV newscaster discusses the mysterious grass disease devastating cereal harvests in China, while well-heeled Britons stuff pink faces with roast beef: there's to be no mincing about here.

The west isn't immune for long. London burns, and John Custance (Nigel Davenport, eye-patched) leads a band of escapees towards his brother's safe-haven farm in the north. The group includes Mrs Custance (Jean Wallace, Wilde's own missus, her face plumped and strange as though, like much of the stock footage, overstretched by the widescreen) and Anthony May as a crackshot sociopath who, plunked into his ideal historical moment, finds himself suddenly the man of the hour. After ploughing their caravan through a food riot, the party march across a countryside of toxic creeks, trees festooned with dead rooks, rape-romps by omnipresent looting biker gangs and us-or-them gunplay, Davenport and May dispassionately dispatching any soldiers and farm wives standing in their way.

The spasmodic editing experiments that marked Wilde's 1967 Beach Red have become full-blown apoplexy here. The journey of the Custances and co is fragged with crosscutting madness, crimson-blotched flashforwards, voiceover fragments, even a freeze-frame flipbook. A mess compared to John Hillcoat's stately post-apocalypse in The Road—though to these eyes the subject-matter and Wilde's berserk,



The Music Lovers Russell makes no pretence at 'straight' biography, instead creating scenes purely to illustrate Tchaikovsky's feverish outpourings

tacky, cudgelling sensibility achieve a bracing singularity of purpose. **Disc:** Having previously seen the film only in barely discernible bootlegs, it seems whinging to complain of the blown-out whites on this Warner transfer. Also, the chapter sequencing of my review copy may have been off. Given the total chaos of the movie, I honestly can't be certain. (NP)

Poetry

Lee Chang-Dong; South Korea 2010; Arrow Films/Region-free DVD and Blu-ray; Certificate 12; 133/139 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: commentary, featurettes, Yun Jung-Hee portrait, Ahn Nae-Sang interview, trailers

Film: If described in overly literal terms as a film about an elderly woman who retreats into poetry in an attempt to find solace and escape from her various troubles (including encroaching Alzheimer's), Lee Chang-Dong's fifth feature sounds as glutinous as anything broadcast by the Hallmark Channel. In fact, his gravely solemn parable could hardly be more carefully measured. Former Korean superstar Yun Jung-

carefully measured. Former Korean superstar Yun Jung-Hee was coaxed out of a 16-year retirement to play the kind of role actresses kill for: she's in virtually every frame, her tiny body and worry-lined face and hands betraying a lifetime of subtle and overt oppression by what is still a deeply sexist society, which she challenges in her own small way by learning to open her eyes to everything around her. Disc: Excellent picture and sound on both formats: the Blu-ray

in particular is all

but flawless. More

generous extras than Kino's US edition include a thoughtful commentary by Lee and critic Kim Young-Jin and a raft of featurettes and interviews, plus a brief survey of Yun Jung-Hee's glory days. (MB)

Films by Ken Russell

The Music Lovers

UK 1970; Final Cut/Region 2 PAL DVD; 118 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

The Boy Friend

Well-versed: 'Poetry'

UK 1971; Warner Archive Collection/ Region 0 NTSC DVD; 136 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.4:1; Features: vintage featurette, 'All Talking... All Singing... All Dancing' Savage Messiah

UK 1972; Warner Archive Collection/ Region 0 NTSC DVD; 99 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: original US trailer

Films: It has taken some time for these titles from the early 1970s, the most energised period of Ken Russell's career,

to emerge on DVD. Russell took no prisoners with his comic-strip life of Richard Strauss on the BBC, after which the big screen became effectively the only outlet for his wild and free riffs on the lives of artists. While a previous Russian epic had depicted Tchaikovsky without a hint of his homosexuality, The Music Lovers tackled the subject head-on, casting in the lead American actor Richard Chamberlain, who himself would only emerge from the closet some years later. Russell liked to boast that he sold the idea to United Artists as "the marriage of a homosexual to a nymphomaniac", and the latter role went to an uninhibited Glenda Jackson, who made cinema history with her Schiele-like contortions in a railway carriage on the composer's disastrous honeymoon.

Working from a Melvyn Bragg script, Russell makes no pretence of delivering a 'straight' biography, instead creating scenes almost purely to illustrate Tchaikovsky's most feverish and lyrical outpourings. The excesses of romanticism often serve as an ironic counterpoint to the composer's struggles with his own true nature and a conservative musical environment. But if music scholars find far more in Tchaikovsky than the familiar bombast, then perhaps Russell is really on their side; in one outrageous fantasy sequence, decapitations by cannon-fire illustrate how the popularity of the 1812 Overture oppressed its creator more than anyone else.

Having upset a few classical music lovers, Russell went on to irritate musical-comedy fans with his adaptation of Sandy Wilson's perennial favourite *The Boy Friend*. Not content with simply filming an already heavily nostalgic piece, in which a 1920s flapper falls for a messenger boy without knowing that he's actually from a wealthy background, the director decided to focus on the participants who are putting on the show in a seedy little English south coast theatre. When the original lead actress breaks a leg, it's down to a young ingénue to take over her part, à la 42nd Street. Meanwhile, a surprise visit from a Hollywood director

inspires the cast to harbour delusions of world fame, giving Russell the excuse to stage extravagant hommages to the film musicals of the 1930s. The result is undeniably fun and spectacular even on a limited budget, but the chief coup was the risky casting of fashion icon Twiggy, who proved herself a screen natural. The film was deemed too long by its original distributor MGM, who trimmed away at it, but this edition thankfully provides us with the full original cut, including an outlandish fantasy scene beginning with nymphs cavorting in the woods and working its

way up into a Roman orgy.

With Savage Messiah, Russell was beginning to find financing more difficult, but the greater intimacy of the subject was suited to a more low-key approach. The director



NEW RELEASES

had long been fascinated by Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier, who died at the age of 23 after a troubled, platonic relationship with Sophie Brzeska, a Polish émigré 20 years his senior. While Scott Antony conveys the energy of youth well enough as Henri, it is Dorothy Tutin's marvellous performance as the neurotic Sophie which dominates the screen. "Savage Messiah brought me closer than any other feature film to the carefree days of filmmaking in the BBC," was Russell's own comment at the time of its release, and the result has for the most part a satisfying grittiness and vitality. The final sequence, a sepia photograph of a uniformed Gaudier at the Front in World War I intercut with Brzeska weeping at his death and an exhibition of his sculptures, shows the filmmaker's multi-textured style at its finest.

All three are remarkable films that could only be the work of one director, highlighting as they do Russell's obsessions with charting the agonies of creativity and forever boldly breaking the taste barrier. Of course one significant title from this period remains resolutely unavailable - The Devils, arguably his finest feature film, and recently reconstituted with its 'Rape of Christ' sequence intact. Message to Warner Brothers - "It's not all, folks." **Discs:** In spite of what the box says, *The* Music Lovers is a good if not exceptional transfer in full letterbox. The Warner releases are both advertised as being in a 'remastered edition', and look fine. Shame about the lack of extras. (DT)

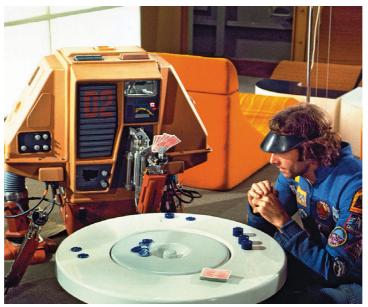
Silent Running

Douglas Trumbull; US 1972; Eureka/ Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate U; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: commentary by Trumbull and Bruce Dern, 1972 'making of', Trumbull and Dern interviews, isolated music and effects track, trailer, booklet

Film: Having worked on the special effects for 2001: A Space Odyssey, Douglas Trumbull made his directorial debut in the same sci-fi arena but took a markedly different approach – his film is lived-in and very human in scale, where Kubrick's visuals were pristine and monumental.

The year is 2008, and the crew of the space freighter Valley Forge are assisted by a trio of stubby, functional-looking droids. The order to jettison their cargo and return to base for the first time in years is greeted with jubilation by all except Bruce Dern's Freeman Lowell, who is enraged that their payload of Earth's last remaining plant life is deemed surplus to requirements —a fervent eco-theme that's still (sadly) relevant four decades after the film's initial rather muted cinema release.

Direct and powerful in its simplicity, this long-time cult favourite is certainly notable for the evident influence of its design work on titles including *Dark Star*, the original *Star Wars*, *Alien*, Duncan Jones's *Moon* and even *Wall-E*, but it's the humanity of Dern's alternately whimsical and impassioned central contribution which is the key



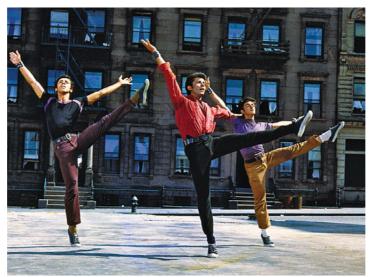
Silent Running This cult favourite is notable for the influence of its design work on titles including 'Star Wars', 'Alien', 'Moon' and even 'Wall-E'

to its enduring appeal. Spotting that a performer hitherto languishing in bit-parts and villainy had this performance in him was one of Trumbull's key decisions, as laid out in the supporting material on this cherishable disc, which also reveals the secrets behind the remarkable droid effects and shows how the availability of a navy aircraft carrier awaiting the scrapyard (the USS Valley Forge, of course) provided the production with a huge floating set at a knockdown price. Disc: An agreeably film-like transfer does justice to the cast's quintessentially 70s orange jumpsuits, while the shared Trumbull-Dern commentary, interviews, 'making of' and superb booklet draw an enthralling portrait of extraordinary endeavour on modest resources. Hard to imagine any sci-fi fan who wouldn't be utterly delighted with this. (TJ)

12 Angry Men

Sidney Lumet; US 1957; Criterion/ Region 0 NTSC DVD; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: montage of Lumet interviews, 1955 TV version of '12 Angry Men', 'Tragedy in a Temporary Town', video essays, essay by law professor Thane Rosenbaum

Film: The funny thing about Sidney Lumet's man's-man, yackety-play midcentury directorial debut, the first of his indelible New Yawk snapshots, is that the essential aspects of its nature that have received scorn over the years are also exactly what makes the movie hypnotic, seductive, timeless and



Jet power: 'West Side Story

resonant. It is a preciously schematic film: on a hot afternoon, a dozen jury members in a closed room attempt to decide on a seemingly open-and-shut case of urban patricide, until one liberal unwilling to coast on assumptions (Henry Fonda) slowly turns the room around, fuelled by doubt but also, more importantly, by the necessity of doubt, in the face of narcissism and prejudice. Every man in the room is a walking-talking social type representing a sociopolitical viewpoint, either positive (Fonda's white-suited progressive, George Voskovec's eager immigrant, Joseph Sweeney's warmhearted septuagenarian), negative (Lee J. Cobb's generational warrior, Ed Begley's rabid race-baiter, E.G. Marshall's neocon intellectual), or somewhere in between, waiting to be swaved away from all-American self-concern and towards a universal humanitarianism. At the same time, you could profitably read this construction, in retrospect, as a semi-pulp fishtank portrait of America at a cultural crossroads, struggling with the post-war adjustments and looking ahead to what became a whole-hog social upheaval.

In either case, the textures of the film actively transform this righteous template into a bristly, suspenseful, heroic firefight, and the credit goes as much to the vivid, motley cast of scrambled character actors and to legendary cinematographer Boris Kaufman, capturing the sweat and tension in stark black-and-white, as to Lumet's brisk pacing, compositional inventiveness and dedication to meaningful performance. (Even limited-range actors like John Fiedler and Robert Webber are allowed to bloom.) Once experienced, the muscular, shameful rage of Cobb's forlorn father and the quiet street-savvy of Jack Klugman's ghetto mouse aren't easy to forget, not to mention Begley's final, toxic plea for bigoted understanding, to which Marshall's toast-dry snob replies, "Now sit down, and don't open your mouth again."

Movies confined to limited spaces tend not to reward multiple viewings, to put it mildly, but Lumet's does; the dozen characters and the offscreen story they must focus on, despite their own rampaging agendas and neuroses, keep this Eisenhower-era artefact plummeting along its procedural track with an energy that has, if anything, grown more robust with age. Disc: The supplements are thick on the ground; if you're not partial to 1950s TV dramas, two of which are included, the Lumet-interview montage is captivating, and the John Baileynarrated homage to Kaufman is superbly framed and insightful. (MA)

West Side Story

Jerome Robbins, Robert Wise; US 1961; 20th Century Fox/All Regions DVD; Certificate PG; 152 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.20:1; Features: song-specific commentary by Stephen Sondheim, 'Pow! The Dances of West Side Story' featurette, 'West Side Memories'

TELEVISION

retrospective documentary, 'A Place for Us: West Side Story's Legacy', trailers

Film: Ever since Pauline Kael knocked West Side Story to the ground on its release and gave it a hearty and partially deserved Jets-and-Sharks style pummelling for its pretensions to art and relevance, critics' responses to it have typically been a combination of rueful rumination on its awkward social drama and the shortcomings of the romantic leads, and hasty celebrations of its musical and choreographic energy.

Fifty years on, watching the elaborate production dissection by the surviving cast and creative crew, you get a new understanding of its then radical fusion of the symphonic, balletic and cinematic with the street. Co-director and originator Jerome Robbins worked his troupe tirelessly on location to make the dancing drive the film narrative as powerfully as Bernstein's rhythmic score did, in the stylised toughness of the finger-snapping opening playground rumble or the tortured, nervy athleticism of 'Cool'. His co-director Robert Wise ensured with him that the camera runs and placements put the spectator at the heart of the dance action, with cuts designed around the body movements. For his perfectionism, Robbins was fired halfway through the shoot ("Right in the middle of the mambo"), but Wise called him back for editing, and for the Oscars.

Stephen Sondheim, eloquent in defence of the film's creative innovations, makes wry, detailed mea culpas for what he classes as overly writerly lyrics - it's one of those rare packages where you watch even classic numbers like 'America' or 'Gee, Officer Krupke' with fresh eyes, having been walked through their genesis. No amount of context can rehabilitate the flat-footed love story, however, but an understanding of Boris Leven's moody production design and Daniel L. Fapp's sharp-shadowed cinematography helps one appreciate Richard Beymer's colour-soaked walk to 'Maria' on quite another level. Disc: The transfer's colours are, fittingly, absolutely glorious, especially the rampant reds of the dance at the gym and the rich blushes washing over Saul Bass's needle abstract which morphs into Manhattan at the end of the overture. Archive historian Robert Harris has identified a significant error. however, in the fade to black and fadein, which inexplicably replace the original dissolve out of Bass's skyline in this release. The audio is as beefy as the extras, which include odd but fascinating exercises such as running Natalie Wood's musical numbers with her own singing voice replacing Marni Nixon's dubbing. The results are neither pretty nor witty. (KS)

This month's releases reviewed by Sergio Angelini, Michael Atkinson, Michael Brooke, James Blackford, Trevor Johnston, Geoffrey Macnab, Nick Pinkerton, Kate Stables and David Thompson



A Very Peculiar Practice More topical than ever in its view of the ruination wrought by the intrusion of big business in education and healthcare

Hawaii Five-0: Season 1

K/O Paper Productions/101st Street/CBS; US 2010-11; Paramount Home Entertainment/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 990 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9 anamorphic; Features: deleted scenes, 'making of', audio commentaries, featurettes

Programme: In the first incarnation of this police procedural, which ran from 1968 to 1980, lantern-jawed Jack Lord played the incorruptible Steve McGarrett as an intense lawand-order fanatic, his blue-suited outer shell barely able to contain his grim determination to beat back criminal barbarians from the shores of America's 50th state. Storylines came in two distinct varieties, the better known being fanciful sub-James Bond adventures featuring arch-villain Wo Fat, though most episodes were more violent and down to earth. This new version has a lot of fun playing with the motifs and basic conceptual architecture of its forerunner, with McGarrett (played by Australian hunk Alex O'Loughlin with a flawless American accent) now an ex-Navy SEAL with anger issues, no understanding of police procedure and a MacGyver-like tendency to construct his own investigative equipment on the hoof.

The main change, however, comes in the way the original protagonist's persona has now been subdivided between McGarrett and his by-the-book cop partner Danno (Scott Caan, who in moments of intense exasperation channels his father James to great comedic effect),

repositioning the main dynamic away from crime to their bickering bromance. Plots are generally disposable, though a strong Christmasthemed episode gives the show a wellneeded boost at the halfway mark by reintroducing a hitherto dormant storyline from the pilot, involving Steve's murdered father as well as the original show's best-known villain.

This is slick, glossy, utterly undemanding hokum, much less gritty than the original - and not just because the winsome Grace Park, in a repetition of what happened with her role in the Battlestar Galactica reboot, has been cast in a role originated by a man (in this case, nightclub entertainer Zulu). Morton Stevens's classic theme music, with its driving 4/4 beat, has been left more or less intact, though – and remains by far the best thing about the show. **Disc:** The anamorphic video and 5.1 audio presentation match the polished sheen of the show. Extras are occasionally amusing if generally disposable, none more so than a risible segment in which Park learns how to dance the hula. (SA)

A Very Peculiar Practice

BBC; UK 1986, 1988, 1992; Network DVD/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 844 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: audio commentaries

Programme: This collection brings together the three iterations of Andrew Davies's magnum opus, an original 1980s satire for television which snugly sidles up alongside the campus comedies of Bradbury, Lodge

and Sharpe to proffer its own distinctively medicinal take on Britain's decline under Thatcher. It's more topical than ever now in its biting view of the ruination wrought by the intrusion of big business into education and healthcare, but what still comes into relief with surprising vividness as the stories darken and become more overtly surreal is the central question at its core: will the kind and high-principled sub-Joycean hero Stephen Daker retain his essentially humanistic outlook, or will he succumb to the encroaching cynicism and materialism snapping at his heels? Peter Davison, playing another of his decent if long-suffering white-bread everymen, is the eager-toplease new GP at a university medical centre who is trying to overcome his own 'touch phobia' after the end of a disastrous marriage. His progress is hindered by a menagerie of grotesques of many memorable shapes and sizes: Graham Crowden's sad, sex-obsessed ("Libido rules, okay?"), permanently sozzled Jock, who is also head of the practice; Timothy West's cuckolded professor with a hair-trigger boiling point; and David Troughton's perfectly monickered Bob Buzzard, a frenetic. bean-counting wannabe yuppie medic who hates patients and loves nothing more than his computer spreadsheets.

The first series is dominated by a wry take on chaos theory as we see the pace of the commercialisation of education quicken and a succession of powerful men humbled and brought to heel through the internecine machinations of the sexually provocative, man-hating Rose Marie (she witheringly refers to a patient's imminent crack-up as a "typically weak male response to the phallic bully"), played to purring perfection by Barbara Flynn. In the second series the conflict between Eros and Thanatos turns into a revolutionary threesome with the addition of Hypnos (many scenes now take place in bed and upon waking) as the university administration sleepwalks towards its own apocalypse, co-opted into the nuclear philosophy of mutually assured destruction when it gets taken over by Americans.

The sardonic tone is extended to noticeably lesser effect for a one-off epilogue, *A Very Polish Practice* (made in 1992), in which Daker is now married and living in Warsaw. Shot on location and on film rather than on tape in the studio, this feels like a very different animal, although the presence of a frazzled Bob Buzzard does help to make up for the absence of Jock and Rose Marie. **Disc:** Extras on this set port over the wood release of the first series from the apond release of the first series.

Disc: Extras on this set port over the two affable audio commentaries from the 2004 release of the first series, featuring Davison, director David Tucker and Davies (who, when asked about one of the show's most iconic images, comments, "I've always been plagued by nuns..."). Video and film elements present no problems. (SA)

BOOK OF THE MONTH

What the audience saw

Nick Pinkerton reviews the life and work of the dovenne of American film criticism

Pauline Kael: A Life in the Dark

By Brian Kellow, Viking, 417pp, £17.50, ISBN 9780670023127

The Age of Movies: Selected **Writings of Pauline Kael**

Edited by Sanford Schwartz, Library of America, 828pp, £25, ISBN 9781598531091

Let us begin with a note of hyperbole. since Pauline Kael never shied away from it. To Clive James, she was "clearly the most significant critic in the English language since Shaw". She was, anyway, among the most read and talked about and loved and hated. In a decade of retirement forced by increasingly debilitating Parkinson's, the doyenne of American film criticism remained a contested figure, visited regularly at her home in the Berkshires, mined for the authoritative judgements that she had lost the ability to type out.

Even after her death in 2001, Kael never disappeared entirely: 2002's 'Afterglow', a dispensable standalone interview book, was a farewell address from beyond the grave; in 2004's 'Sontag and Kael', Kael's old friend Craig Seligman lined up a faceoff between these two lionesses who rose to prominence in the 1960s. And now two more books set us to appraising, yet again, the legacy of la Kael.

Brian Kellow's 'Pauline Kael: A Life in the Dark' is, inasmuch as I can recall, a unique book: the full-length biography (not autobiography, mind) of a writer who was first and last a film critic - a breed generally more disposed to write about than to be written about. Kellow straightens out the pre-fame biographical details that Kael was loath to dwell on herself. The fifth and youngest child of Polish-born Jews. Kael was born in rural Petaluma, California in 1919, and raised on her parents' prosperous chicken ranch. This experience was central to Pauline's unpretentious, dirt-between-toes persona, although she wasn't quite ten when the failure of the family farm brought the Kaels to Depression-era San Francisco. From here, Kellow extrapolates information on Kael's youthful moviegoing from later reviews and follows her to the University of California at Berkeley, documenting her budding student socialism, her omnivorous consumption of the arts, and her quiet drop-out just shy of graduation.

Kael spent the war years failing to find a foothold for her ambitions in New York City, then returned, broke, to Berkeley. Here primary sources start to speak, and Kael the woman comes into focus, as does her sense of vocation. She reviewed Chaplin's 'Limelight' for San Francisco's City Lights Journal; broadcast her



opinions via listener-supported KPFA-FM radio, where she routinely slagged Eastern critics; provided programme notes at the two-screen Berkeley Cinema Guild; and was an unusually strident voice in the pages of this august publication. (See, for instance, her polemic 'Is There a Cure for Film Criticism?', S&S, Spring 1962.)

With her melting descriptions of actors and actresses. Kael seemed more game than any critic for Sontag's 'Against Interpretation' challenge for "an erotics of art", and there is a standing assumption that the younger Pauline got around. The personal reminiscences that pepper her reviews are prone to mentioning old boyfriends, while in a 1961 piece she still spoke in the present tense of meeting "a man who seems charming or at least remotely possible" (actually one of the paper tigers she was forever setting up to blow down with her own breezy wit).

'A Life in the Dark' doesn't give much evidence of a hyperactive love life. In an included picture of the 1936 graduating class of San Francisco's Girls' High School, Kael is thick-ankled and undeniably dowdy. Though Kael claimed to have been

twice or thrice married. Kellow turns up only the one confirmed husband, Cinema Guild owner Edward Landberg. And while there is a phantom lover who appears in a 1941 letter. Kellow tells mostly of Kael's extensive involvements with bisexual men, beginning with the poets Robert **Duncan and Robert Horan at Berkeley,** and continuing through her relationship with the experimental filmmaker James Broughton, the father of Kael's daughter Gina, born out of wedlock in 1948, (Gina declined to participate in the biography, a felt absence.)

"Done with men", Kael had only begun with criticism. She muscled her way back to New York City, and after a journeyman freelance period, arrived at the New Yorker offices, aged 48, in 1967. From here Kellow is largely left to track Kael's byline from season to season - reflective of the

Her parents' chicken ranch was central to Kael's dirt-betweenthe-toes persona

degree to which her activity as a critic, raconteur and hub of a group of admiring younger writers was now her entire life. As if underlining the redundancy of his project past this point, Kellow later quotes Kael's introduction to her careerspanning 1994 collection 'For Keeps': "I'm frequently asked why I don't write my memoirs. I think I already have."

And so to the second event in Kael studies: Library of America's collection 'The Age of Movies: Selected Writings of Pauline Kael'. This new volume's advantages over 'For Keeps' (now out of print) are principally those of portability. 'The Age of Movies' has shed about 400 pages from its predecessor, mostly through scaled-back representation of Kael's last three collections which, by almost universal agreement, showed signs of diminishing returns after her return from a 1979 tour of duty in Hollywood lured West by Warren Beatty's promise of a producing job, then treated to the indignity of reporting to Don Simpson.

Rereading Kael's formative reviews, the pre-New Yorker pieces collected in 'I Lost It at the Movies' the credo that comes through is a suspicion of systems. This applies to dramatic construction, what Kael calls the "Lillian Hellman melodrama with good and evil clay pigeons". It applies also to critical systems, as in her famous 1963 polemic for Film Quarterly, 'Circles and Squares', which drew the lines of battle between the Kaelites and the auteurists (led in America by Andrew Sarris) for years to come. 'Circles and Squares' is omitted by 'The Age of Movies', but her 1969 essay 'Trash, Art, and the Movies' (included here) details her position in contrast to the auteurists: she was urging American movies to achieve the level of art: the auteurists insisted that they had been there all along.

Cultivating the role of outsider, Kael aligned her perceptions to those of the crowd, siding with what 'the audience' saw in movies - according to her seemingly clairvoyant perceptions - as opposed to what 'the industry' or 'the director' intended in them, or 'the critics' found. (Here is where her use of the royal we comes into play.) She was unmatched at describing actors, and some of the best early pieces - on Brando and Paul Newman - work in this vein, showing where something implicit in an actor's persona chafed against the simpleminded, placeholder way that filmmakers were using them.

Taste, according to Paul Valéry, is made of a thousand distastes - and Kael's rejection of systems made a system of its own. She was a proselytiser for her own sensibility where she found it on screen, an advocate of nose-thumbing cynicism against the official super-American doctrine of idealism propagated by Louis 'Born on the 4th of July' Mayer. In Old Hollywood, she was partial to gangster pictures, light musicals and insouciant newspaper comedies, and had little

FURTHER READING

Life Itself: A Memoir

By Roger Ebert, Grand Central, 436pp, £20. ISBN 9780446584975

Only in America - as far as I know could or would a newspaper film reviewer publish a 400-page autobiography in his autumnal phase, as a novelist or statesman might, recounting a life primarily taken up, by definition, with acts of passive viewing and solitary sentence-making. Not even Pauline Kael, a far more narcissistic and revered quasi-celeb than Ebert, dared to attempt such a thing. But such is the place Ebert has attained in the Yankee brainpan: more of an Everyman's popculture figurehead than a critic, in a nation that has little general use for film criticism beyond the crudest consumer recommendations. If only Kael had had a nationally syndicated TV show; Ebert's more than three decades reviewing on the tube, reducing every film's worth to a 20-second summation and a thumb up or down, earned him the kind of name recognition usually reserved for

mandarin network news anchors. The Ebertisation of film reviewing should've earned him opprobrium from cinephiles, particularly since, as a working journalist for the Chicago Sun-Times, Ebert was typically a dull and talky prose writer. But instead he has become the official pope-king of electronic film culture, out-tweeting the competition by a long mile and churning out blogs and postings in compensation for the talking he can no longer do since losing much of his jaw and throat to cancer surgery.



The people's pundit: Roger Ebert

The rather grandly titled Life Itself is the low-boiling affair you'd expect: an episodic tour of Ebert's memory cabinet. one three-or-four-page jot at a time, from his upbringing and his college opportunities to his days as a cub reporter in Chicago, his decision to quit drinking and join AA in 1979, his screenwriting with Russ Meyer, and so on – none of it particularly interesting as memoir stuff per se. Given the unavoidable fact that being a workaday film reviewer does not make for an objectively exciting life story, Ebert leaves his film experiences off the table, and spends many chapters recalling the dinners and interviews he had with Martin Scorsese, Werner Herzog,

Robert Mitchum, Woody Allen etc. Naturally, he also ruminates at length about his testy relationship with TV co-host Gene Siskel, in mythopoetic detail that might befit a record of the relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt.

For all that, however, Ebert's voice is modest not only in erudition but in regards to personal matters; he makes no great claim for his life's work, and neither does he venture a motive for the reader - beside the implicit allure of gossip - to plunge so deeply into the minor incidents of his biography. Certainly, we are not meant to be dazzled by style or insight ("Bergman was in the news after he fell into conflict with Sweden's tax laws I don't recall the details") But as a critic, Ebert has never looked to raise the bar on himself, admitting early on in the book that the unadventurous way he began writing about film has remained, over more than four decades. essentially consistent.

Which is fine for most American readers, who look to Ebert for a pleasantly permissive attitude and quick what-to-see advice, even if these are not necessarily compatible values. (Ebert has shrugged indulgently over thousands of deplorable films. Why do readers not dislike him for encouraging them to see, say, 1993's Cop and a Half?) That such readers might be interested in the man behind the words, or within the review-show sweater and tweed. remains something of a mystery.

Michael Atkinson

Making the Transformational Moment in Film

By Dan Fleming, Michael Wiese Productions, 238pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781615930609

This is a curious book – or books. Rich, fuzzy and frustrating in equal measure, it has three titles - Making the Transformational Moment in Film: Unleashing the Power of the Image (with the Films of Vincent Ward). It comes in landscape format and is copiously illustrated with diagrams, frame enlargements, popularity graphs from IMDb Pro and even a short graphic novel. There are many aesthetic viewpoints explored in its 238 pages, but 'less is more' is not one of them.

Dan Fleming is professor of Screen and Media Studies at the University of Waikato in New Zealand, and his core premise is that film is capable of producing "transformational moments" when the temporal hegemony of the narrative is suspended and the imagination opens the image out into a new dimension. His book, he says, is aimed at filmmakers, replacing the technical instructions of the usual 'how to' books with one focused on the impact of the image.

Fleming's concern is with what he calls 'Anglophone' cinema – the implication being that films made in



Transformational moments: Robin Williams in 'What Dreams May Come'

English are ipso facto sucked into a certain kind of Hollywood-flavoured, plot-dominated filmmaking. But does this category include, say, Guy Maddin or Derek Jarman - or even Vincent Ward himself? The overall tone is one of a painterly aesthetic far removed from the world of theory (film or cultural). It's not always clear what the "transformational moment" is, but some attempt to situate it within the framework of postmodernism – where similar notions are found – might have helped.

Using Ward as an example creates more problems than it solves. A filmmaker of erratic genius who recently announced he was abandoning

filmmaking to go back to 'making art', his films are simply not well enough known to act as reference points: Map of the Human Heart (1998) and River Queen (2005) were hardly released internationally, while his only real 'Hollywood' movie, What Dreams May Come (1993), has problems of a different nature. At all events, those expecting an auteur study are in for a shock.

Will it help filmmakers? I'm not sure: it will intrigue some but irritate others with its constant elbow-nudging and recaps. It starts with a section called 'How to Read This Book'. Gradually, not at a single sitting, would be my suggestion. Nick Roddick

and taxing but, rereading her, it's extraordinary to note the facility with which she shuttles between film, literature, and theatre. Such an irritant to the ingrown culture of self-satisfied canonical cinephilia is dearly missed, and even in disagreement there is no finer whetstone to sharpen one's - or should I say our thinking against.

sympathy for westerns and the axiomatic,

mythic actors who populated them.

(Among other 'myths' she was quick to sniff out was any trace of Christian

dogma, for which she took Fellini and

Jean Eustache to task, while brilliantly

simpatico with Buñuel's extravagantly

lapsed Catholicism.) She was able to

the temperament of American movies

her critical doctrine was as forbidding

of divergent worldviews, in its way, as

brawling, bawdy, bitchy - and it's for

that voice that she will be remembered.

The essayist Robert Warshow's dictum

that the "New Yorker has always dealt

understand it but by prescribing the

attitude to be adopted toward it" has

held up remarkably well since 1947, but

Kael gave her flagship a shove away from

the hands-off gentleman-critic model. To

fourth collection of reviews) with Kael was

Both tomes attest to the extraordinary

The New Yorker in the era of editor William

go 'Deeper into Movies' (the title of her

to take a trip, with the guide enthusing,

"Oh, look at that! And that! And that!"

indulgence the writer was extended at

Shawn. This includes not only the free

range in word count given to Kael (7,000

words for 'Bonnie and Clyde'!), but also the

patience shown to Penelope Gilliatt - the

former Observer critic with whom Kael

reluctantly shared 'The Current Cinema' column until 1980, a long tenure given

barely fixed financially, even as she was

America's most influential film critic.)

time to warm to her topic (she admired filmmakers who, like herself, found their

subject en route) as often as it buried her

best perceptions under an avalanche of verbiage. It is fair to say, regardless, that

subtractive talent, which partly explains

Westerner-come-East, Joan 'bare bones'

Didion - and her sympathy with Norman Mailer who, she remarked, "puts in what

other writers have been educated to leave

out". (In our era of shrinking column space,

could the expansive Kael be an 'influence'

Kael's insistence on treating movies

responsibilities are over can be redundant

anywhere but in online criticism?)

largely as light divertissement or

"trashy fun" after a day's real artistic

the enmity between her and another

hers was an additive rather than

The licence to prolixity often gave Kael

Gilliatt's fall-down alcoholism and occasional bouts of plagiarism. (Another of Kellow's revelations is that Kael was

with experience not by trying to

Kael fought for her voice - brusque,

the League of Decency's.

of the time was her own; at other times,

rhapsodise through the mid-1970s because

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Crossing the borderline

I realise that we often like or dislike different films. However, Geoff Brown is wrong to claim that Borderline is "just the kind of film you don't want to see on a Friday night" (Festival report, S&S, December). I do - congratulations to Pordenone for giving me the opportunity.

And why does he use the word "lowering" when discussing New Babylon? It is surely the cinematic equal of his favoured The Wind (Victor Sjöström). Its score by Shostakovich is certainly as fine musically as that by Carl Davis for the Hollywood production. And the Soviet film undoubtedly has superior political values: its heroine dies confronting the reactionaries, unlike Lilian Gish's Letty, who succumbs to a hero responsible for marital rape. Keith Withall

Leeds

Small is beautiful

I enjoy Mr Busy's column (Rushes, S&S, October) too much to enquire about his age! I'm nearly 50 and unlike my parents' generation have seen very few films at the cinema, despite being a BFI member for more than 20 years. Living in rural areas, cinemas have always been too far away and/or too expensive for me, and I'm lucky if I get to London more than twice a year. Television was the main way I encountered films and apart from film clubs, it is still the only way to encounter great films (not mainstream drivel) away from cities. Nowadays I don't waste time with television itself (I'll have to wait for Mark Cousins's, I'm sure unmissable, new series) but discover a greater variety of worthwhile films on DVD than I could see at the cinema even if I were rich and



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Asleep on the job

Sophie Mayer is entitled to her negative take on Julia Leigh's Sleeping Beauty (Reviews, S&S, November) even if I think she's unfair to an ambitious film which is remarkably successful within the limits it sets itself. But can the film really be accused of "Orientalism" simply because of a premise taken from a Kawabata Yasunari novel? There's nothing within the film itself that lends itself to such a critique; there's no more reason to accuse Leigh of Orientalism here than Benoît Jacquot for adapting Mishima in *L'Ecole de la chair* or John Sturges for remaking Kurosawa's Seven Samurai as The Magnificent Seven. Or is simply using a source from outside your own culture now enough to tar you with the sin of Orientalism?

Mayer is also mistaken in ascribing the first client's monologue to Julio Cortázar. (Unlike Mayer, I think this scene is a very effective one, where Leigh uses a stylistic 'break' – a static shot of a character speaking straight to the camera – to mark the film's shift from Lucy's point of view.) In fact, both the client within his monologue and



the end titles specifically cite Ingeborg Bachmann's story 'The Thirtieth Year'. This referencing of an Austrian writer seems very apt given the film's stylistic indebtedness to the Austrian school of Haneke, Seidl, Hausner et al. lan Johnston Taipei, Taiwan

lived in London. Though lucky enough to have a collection of three or four thousand films, I've only ever managed to see one of my top ten in a cinema – and the greatest of all films, Powell and Pressburger's A Canterbury Tale, still eludes me in its true form. Our television is only an average widescreen tube, and I know this is far too small, so I can fully appreciate Mr Busy's lament. But I wonder if my experience is really so rare? Lawrence Freiesleben

Northumberland

In praise of the Flipside

Could I take this opportunity to thank BFI DVD for its services to British cinema over the last couple of years? The immaculately researched, produced and packaged DVD and Blu-ray sets released in the recent past have been a fundamental stimulus to a complete reappraisal of some hidden aspects of our film culture. All of the Flipside DVDs deserve mention and one especially - Don Levy's Herostratus containing superbly curated extra material that is a genuine revelation. Similarly, the DVDs of Jane Arden and Jack Bond's work - Separation, The Other Side of the Underneath and Anti-Clockhave presented material that has surely caused one entire section of British cinema history – feminist features – to be virtually rewritten. And finally, if indulgently, the recent set of Mike Sarne's Joanna and Road to St Tropez surely presents two of the most forgotten eulogies to a culture that once really 'swung'.

Tim Young By email

Life after death

I enjoyed The Awakening a lot more than your reviewer (S&S, December), however he seems to have missed the ambiguity of the ending in his synopsis. There is no reason to believe for certain that Florence was indeed saved and survived. And, if you watch the carefully orchestrated final scene, for all we know she might have become a ghost that only Dominic West's character Robert can see (in the same way that only Florence and Maud were able to see the child's ghost). Observe the way she gets out of the way of several characters who do not seem to be seeing her at all while leaving the house. At the O&A at the London Film Festival screening, the director Nick Murphy did confirm that the ending had been left open on purpose, and while he refused to confirm whether he thought she had survived or not he said he wanted the audience to decide for themselves.

Laurent de Alberti

Adapting the adaptation

In all the various discussions of Spielberg's The Adventures of Tintin (Reviews, S&S, December) and its fidelity - or lack thereof - to Hergé's original books, I have seen no reference made to one fundamental anomaly: this is an adaptation that's clearly based not on the original (Belgian) works, but on the English-language versions of the books that were themselves already adaptations rather than strict translations. (For instance, they give the impression that Tintin and Captain Haddock live in England!) At least the

recent live-action, French-language Asterix movies went back to their original source.

René van der Velde

Brussels, Belgium

Yorkshire matters

In Kate Stables's review of Andrea Arnold's Wuthering Heights (S&S, December), she quotes "Heathcliff's sullen cries of 'Fook Off'". While I have no problem with seeing four-letter words in your publication, I would appreciate it if they were spelled correctly (as indeed they are in Amy Raphael's excellent feature in the same issue, to wit: "Fuck you all. Cunts"), and not in this pseudo-phonetic 'northern' way. As one of your north-eastern readers (yes, believe it or not, S&S is available beyond the confines of the M25), I find this patronising, clichéd and tiresome - the sort of thing one might expect to see in a Fleet Street rag hoping for a cheap laughs about cloth caps and whippets, but not in S&S.

Eleanor Forest

Gateshead, Tyne & Wear

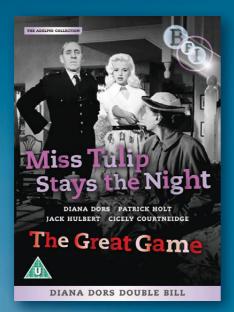
Could it be that Andrea Arnold's unprecedented decision to cast a black actor as Heathcliff in her adaptation of Wuthering Heights ('Love Will Tear Us Apart', S&S, December) was down to a basic misunderstanding of the meaning of the term 'the Yorkshire Moors'?

Magnus Charles

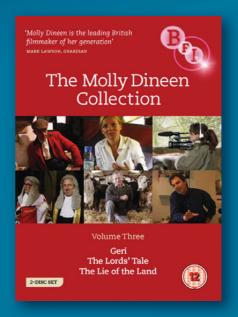
Additions and corrections to previous months' Reviews can now be found at the end of the Reviews section on p.82

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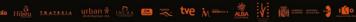






































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